University of Alberta

Between Literary Systems:
Authors of Literature for Adults Write for Children

by

Larissa Jean Klein Tumanov ©

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Larissa Klein Tumanov

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5 October, 1999

Les deux anges, qui veillaient sur lui depuis sa libération, le cueillirent dans leurs grandes ailes, et, le ciel nocturne s'étant ouvert sur d'immenses clartés, ils emportèrent celui qui, après avoir été le dernier, le perpétuel retardataire, venait de recevoir l'eucharistie le premier.

Michel Tournier

Gaspard, Melchior & Balthazar and *Les Rois mages*

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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Between Literary Systems: Authors of Literature for Adults Write for Children" submitted by Larissa Jean Klein Tumanov in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature.

Marisa Bortolussi

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Lynn K. Penrod

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October 4, 1999

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the members of my family, who have waited so patiently and lovingly for its completion: my parents, Betty and Howard; my sisters, Marcia and Jeannine; my parents-in-law, Alla and Sasha; my husband, Vladimir; and children, Alex (who used to call this a "feesis") and Vanessa (who still asks: "How's your peesis?"). I must also not forget about Kuzia the Schnauzer, who spent so many hours dozing at my feet as I worked and got directly involved in my research by eating the bindings of two tasty library books. This dedication is furthermore to Shannon and Glenn whose words of encouragement made a tremendous difference.

And most regrettably I add:

To the memory of Liliana Rossi, fellow student of Comparative Literature.

Abstract

While various semiotic phenomena have been studied according to Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystemic approach as "intersecting systems of systems," another possibility is to consider how individual authors function as members of different literary systems and to explore the relationship between these realms of activity. This dissertation concerns the largest category of such authors: individuals who have written for both children and adults, and whom I call adult/children's system authors. Focusing on Kornei Chukovskii, Mikhail Zoshchenko, Daniil Kharms, Eugène Ionesco, and Michel Tournier, I seek to demonstrate one way in which adult/children's system authors write for children: they produce ambivalent texts addressed to a dual child/adult audience. The above individuals can thus be seen to follow the example of many other nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers of literature for adults whose turn to the field of children's literature has likewise resulted in the creation of ambivalent works (e.g., George MacDonald, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, A.A. Milne). My detailed readings, inspired by reader-oriented theories, show how children and adults might make sense of my authors' texts (as well as the paratext where applicable). I conlude that the sort of literature I examine is indeed ambivalent and as such can be seen to occupy a space "between literary systems."

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Introduction

The Polysystem, Writing for Children, and Writing for Adults

0.1. The Polysystem Perspective and Plural System Authors

Itamar Even-Zohar sets out the rationale behind his polysystem theory by saying that "semiotic phenomena, i.e., sign-governed human patterns of communication (such as culture, language, literature, society), could more adequately be understood and studied if regarded as systems rather than conglomerates of disparate elements" (1990, 9). Even-Zohar, who locates the roots of his own approach in the works of the Russian Formalists and Czech Structuralists, calls for a study of socio-cultural institutions which would seek to reveal the multiplicity of synchronic and diachronic intersections and transfers between the various dynamic and heterogeneous systems or "polysystems," i.e., systems of systems. In this way, static and limited perspectives would be replaced by broader and more inclusive approaches.

As far as literature is concerned, this means that instead of analyzing canonical works *ad infinitum*, attention should be paid to all sorts of center-and-periphery relations. For example, in bilingual societies, the dominant literature must not be studied without a consideration of the less dominant one (and vice versa), and minority literatures should be examined in relation to majority literatures. Even-Zohar mentions some

other areas which would be brought together under the polysystem approach:

> Literature for children is not considered a phenomenon *sui generis*, but is related to literature for adults; translated literature is not disconnected from "original" literature; mass literary production (thrillers, sentimental novels, etc.) is not simply dismissed as "non-literature" in order to evade discovering its mutual dependence with "individual" literature (1979, 292).

Although Even-Zohar seems to be most interested in the application of his theory to the study of widespread socio-cultural matters, such as the development of whole national literatures or the connections between languages, his definition of system also allows for another sort of focus. A system is "the complex of activities, or any section thereof, for which systemic relations can be hypothesized" (Even-Zohar 1990, 85). Therefore, the term "heterogeneous system" could be used to refer to the œuvre of an individual author who has worked in any two or more domains which can be divided along systemic lines: e.g., literature in different languages and/or for different national literatures, "mass" literature and "individual" (i.e., "high") literature or, in the case of the authors at the centre of this dissertation, children's literature and literature for adults.[1]

[1]In private correspondence with me, Itamar Even-Zohar and Zohar Shavit have both confirmed that the polysystem approach has not yet been used to discuss the cases of individual authors as I am doing here.

Polysystem theory thus provides us with a way of envisaging the literatures of individual authors as "microsystems" which help make up and shape the larger polysystem, as well as function as specific points of contact or "bridges" between particular systems. As in the case of the polysystem as a whole, the different literatures with which an author is involved may feature the same sort of intersections and transfers mentioned above: in other words, the relationship between an author's literatures may be characterized by "interference" (Even-Zohar 1990, 54). Or, on the other hand, a given individual's literatures may show evidence of a strict division rather than the crossing of boundaries between systems: such cases, then, could be seen as examples of "non-interference" (Even-Zohar 1990, 59).

An author who writes as a representative of two or more systems may be called a "plural system author." In theory, this term could be applied to those who do not intentionally write and/or publish as representatives of different systems, but whose works are placed into certain strata according to the workings of the literary institution. For example, any author who has appeared in translation could be considered a plural system author as could someone like Daniel Defoe who does not intend to write for children, but who creates a work such as *Robinson Crusoe* which eventually finds its way to a child audience. However, the present study concerns only those writers who are themselves involved in the creation and/or publication of works within more than one system.

Thus, Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov are plural system authors, since both wrote in two different languages and were

furthermore representatives of more than one national literature. In her book on Nabokov, Jane Grayson notes that

> to be successful in not one, but two languages is indeed a rare achievement. Many bilingual writers, Conrad being a notable example, have written exclusively in their adopted language. To earn a high standing in two literatures is a distinction which Nabokov shares with only one other living writer, the novelist and dramatist Samuel Beckett (2).

Beckett and Nabokov also deserve to be called plural system authors because they are authors of "original," as well as of translated texts: both did auto-translations either independently or in collaboration with someone else.[2]

These best-known twentieth-century bilingual, plural system authors have a number of bilingual or multilingual predecessors, some of whom similarly made use of a new language after emigrating. For example, Yvan Goll, who was first associated with the German expressionists and later with the surrealists in France, wrote mainly in German and French, but also in English following his move to the United States in 1940. Bruno Jasienski composed poetry in Polish and then, after relocating to Russia, published socialist-realist novels in Russian. Rilke wrote in German, Russian, and Italian. Then, living the last years of his life in the

[2]Two books which look at Nabokov and Beckett respectively from the perspective of their bilingualism and the question of translation are Jane Grayson's *Nabokov Translated: A Comparison of Nabokov's Russian and English Prose* (London: Oxford UP, 1977) and Alan Friedman et al., eds. *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1987).

countryside of the Valais, he wrote in French "and was accepted as a French poet by the French literary world, and indeed it was no less a figure than Paul Valéry who encouraged him to continue writing in French and to get his work published in France" (Forster 69). Rilke's contemporary, the poet Stefan George, wrote in French, German, English, and Latin. Furthermore, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, there were numerous Jewish writers in Eastern Europe who wrote in both Yiddish and Hebrew, for example, Mendele Moykher-Sforim (Sholem-Yankev Abramovich). Other earlier multilingual authors include: Milton, who composed poetry in English, Latin, Greek, and Italian; the Polish Renaissance poet, Jan Kochanowski, who wrote in Polish and Latin; the German baroque poet and dramatist, Andreas Gryphius, whose languages were German and Latin; and the priest Layamon, who lived in Norman England and wrote in Latin, Middle English, and Anglo-Norman.

The term plural system author can also be applied to the many Soviet writers who wrote "unofficial" works which were published only in the West or after the fall of Communism, as well as "official," often self-censored texts. This usually meant writing entirely different works, as in the case of Anna Akhmatova, who wrote poems "for the drawer" while publishing patriotic poetry in the hope of gaining her son's release from prison. On the other hand, Solzhenitsyn's *V Kruge Pervom* [*The First Circle*] provides an example of how the same work can be written in two different versions: the 87-chapter text was prepared for publication in the

USSR, and Solzhenitsyn tried to "lighten" it to make the work acceptable to the censorship; however, the "unofficial" 96-chapter version is the one that the author claims to be the "podlinnyi tekst" [authentic version] which represents his original and final intent.[3]

As far as plural system authors who have written both "mass" literature and "individual" literature are concerned, Julian Barnes is one of several "serious" novelists to have published mystery fiction under a pseudonym. And there are rumours that aside from creating such works as *Les Gommes* (1953), *La Jalousie* (1959), and *Dans le labyrinthe* (1959), Alain Robbe-Grillet also wrote pornographic novels under various *noms de plume*.

But what is by far the largest sub-category of plural system authors consists of those who have written for adults, as well as for children, and whom I will call adult/children's system authors. In what follows I would like to look from a global perspective at who adult/children's system authors are, when in their careers they have written for children, and why. Subsequently, I will review the scholarly literature concerning writers who have penned works for both juvenile and adult readerships. And, finally, I will describe my specific focus.

---

[3]See Chapter Five of Lev Loseff's *On the Beneficence of Censorship* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1984) entitled, "Aesopian Language and the Suggestivity of the Text: Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Work on the 'Watered-down' Version of the Novel *The First Circle* (1968)." Incidentally, Solzhenitsyn explains regarding the 87-chapter variant that although "considered and accepted by *Novy mir* in June of 1964, [ultimately] the effort to publish it failed" (quoted in Loseff 144). Subsequently, the new, amplified version was created for publication in the West.

0.2. Adult/Children's System Authors

Among the company of adult/children's system authors are those writers discussed briefly by Bettina Hürlimann in the final chapter of *Three Centuries of Children's Books in Europe* (1967).[4] In "Men of Letters Write for Children" she draws attention to the children's works of Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, Erich Kästner, Grahame Greene, T.S. Eliot, Selma Lagerlöf, Walter de la Mare, Rudyard Kipling, and Christian Morgenstern. But the list of adult/children's system authors is much longer than this. Prior to the nineteenth century, when children did not yet constitute a significant reading public, there was a limited number of them. To use the example of English literature, we see that Chaucer wrote *Tretis of the Astrolabie* (1391) to "instruct his son in the medium of 'light Englissh' since the adult sources in Latin would be less accessible" (Allsobrook 410); Bunyan created *Divine Emblems* or *Book for Boys and Girls* (1686); Issaac Watts gave children his *Divine Songs* (1715); and Richardson created several of his own works for young readers, as well as a version of *Aesop* "which was possibly loved into extinction by child owners" (Allsobrook 412). But it was in the nineteenth and particularly the twentieth century that the number of adult/children's system authors swelled. Here are some representatives from various national literatures:

Canada: Margaret Laurence, Pierre Berton, Roch Carrier, Margaret Atwood, Mordecai Richler, Joy Kogawa, Antonine Maillet, Gabrielle

[4]The original version of Hürlimann's book, *Europäische Kinderbücher in drei Jahrhunderten*, was first published in 1959.

Roy, Morley Callaghan, Suzanne Martel, Farley Mowat, Dominique Demers.
Czech Republic: Karel Capek.
France: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Anatole France, Guillaume Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Marguerite Yourcenar, André Maurois, Jean Giono, Eugène Ionesco, Marcel Aymé, Henri Bosco, Jacques Prévert, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, Michel Tournier.
Germany: E.T.A. Hoffmann, Hanna Johansen, Gabrielle Wohmann, Heinrich Böll, Peter Hacks, Wolf Biermann.[5]
Great Britain and Ireland: Oscar Wilde, John Ruskin, Thomas Hardy, Frederick Marryat, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, George MacDonald, Charles Kingsley, Hilaire Belloc, James Joyce, A.A. Milne, Aldous Huxley, Robert Graves, Virginia Woolf, Rosemary Sutcliff, Alan Garner, Penelope Lively, Eleanor Farjeon, Nina Bawden, Salman Rushdie.
Italy: Edmondo De Amicis, Emilio Salgari, Umberto Eco.
Japan: Miyazawa Kenji.
Nigeria: Chinua Achebe.
Norway: Einar Økland, Tor Åge Bringsværd.
Poland: Julian Tuwim
Russia: Lev Tolstoi, Vasilii Zhukovskii, Nikolai Nekrasov, Anton Chekhov, Aleksei Tolstoi, Sasha Chernyi, Valentin Rasputin, Ivan Bunin, Daniil Kharms, Aleksandr Blok, Iurii Olesha, Kornei Chukovskii, Aleksander Vvedenskii, Mikhail Zoshchenko, Veniamin Kaverin, Roman Sef, Josef Brodsky.
Spain: Carmen Martín Gaite, Rosa Montero.
Sweden: Inger Edelfelt.
Switzerland: Peter Bichsel.
United States: Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Faulkner, James Thurber, Gertrude Stein, Ludwig Bemelmans, Carl Sandburg, Sylvia Plath, Russell Hoban, e.e. cummings, Eudora Welty, Amy Tan, Randall Jarrell.

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[5]In 1966, Gertraud Middelhauve published *Dichter erzählen Kindern*, a collection of German stories for children written by well-known authors of literature for adults, including Wohmann, Böll, Hacks, Biermann, as well as Peter Bichsel.

0.3. When Do Adult/Children's System Authors Write for Children?

David Galef explains that authors who write both children's and adults' fiction can be categorized in terms of the point in their career when they write for younger readers (29). He presents Russell Hoban, Roald Dahl, and A.A. Milne as examples of individuals who, respectively: 1) first are children's writers and later turn to writing for adults; 2) make the opposite move, deciding to write for children after becoming known as authors of literature for adults; and 3) alternate equally throughout their careers between publishing for children and publishing for adults.[6]

While most adult/children's system authors fall into Galef's three categories (of which the second is probably the most common), I see the need to create two additional divisions or perhaps subdivisions. The first is that of authors whose *pre-existing* children's works are published only after these authors have become prominent figures within the adult literary system. Three examples which all involve posthumous publication are: William Faulkner (*The Wishing Tree*); James Joyce (*The Cat and the Devil*) and e.e. cummings (*Fairy Tales*). My second division is the reverse of the previous one and applies, in particular, to representatives of the Soviet literary system. This group includes authors who published for children and become known as "children's writers,"

[6]Incidentally, in her *Introduction to the World of Children's Books* (Aldershot: Gower, 1982), Margaret Marshall had already briefly set out exactly the same classifications (24).

while most or all of their unconventional works for adults were not published or even submitted for publication. An excellent example is Daniil Kharms, who rose to prominence as a children's author in the 1920s and 30s whereas his adult works (with the exception of two poems) were only published posthumously, first in Germany and the United States, and then gradually in the USSR as the system of state censorship began to soften.

0.4. Why Do Adult/Children's System Authors Write for Children?

Regardless of whether they write their children's texts before, at the same time as, or after they create/publish works for the adult system, one factor that motivates writers to pen a work for junior readers is "having children in the household" (Galef 33) or having other young relatives, friends, or pupils in need of a story. Aside from the above-mentioned case of Chaucer writing for his "Lytle Lowys," Vasilii Zhukovskii, for example, wrote a number of poems "to introduce his German-speaking children to the Russian language" (Sokol 47). Charles Kingsley created *The Heroes; or, Greek Fairy Tales for My Children* for Rose, Maurice, and Mary; whereas Kingsley's next son, Grenville, later got the dedication of *The Water Babies* all to himself (Alderson 75). Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring* was written "during a Christmas season spent in Italy, for a group of young children including his own" (Tremper 39). In the case of Roald Dahl, it was "the bedtime stories he told [his children] that formed the nucleus of *James and the Giant Peach*" (Galef 29), and this

young audience also motivated him to create other works. A.A. Milne likewise created the Pooh stories for his son, Christopher Robin, while daughters were the original addressees of Kipling's *Just So Stories*, e.e. cummings's *Fairy Tales*, Eugène Ionesco's *Contes*, Konstantin Bal'mont's *Feinye skazki* [Fairy's Tales], and James Thurber's *Many Moons*.

On the other hand, grandchildren were the first recipients of George Sand's *Contes d'une grand-mère* and James Joyce's *The Cat and the Devil*. And Lev Tolstoi devised his highly moralistic tales in order to instruct the peasant children on his estate, as well as his young nieces and nephews. Whereas William Faulkner wrote *The Wishing Tree* not for a relative, but for an eight-year-old friend named Victoria. And Henri Bosco, who was a teacher, apparently "a inventé devant ses élèves... *L'Âne Culotte*" (Beckett 1997, 25).

Another common possibility, which may or may not be combined with other motivations, is writing children's literature because of a financial incentive. For example, Frederick Marryat's turn to the field in the mid-nineteenth century occurred at least partly because of his interest in the pecuniary rewards. After writing novels for adults which were based on his experiences as a ship captain, "Marryat deliberately crossed the border from adult to children's fiction and produced his 'Juvenile Library' (which he sometimes referred to as his 'little income')" (Townsend 1974, 60). For Dahl, similarly, creating works to entertain his young progeny was most definitely not an end in itself, but rather a

means of gaining a new readership and, more importantly, new royalties. Dahl's crossover "was more an imperative than a lark: he confessed that he had begun running out of short-story ideas, and in any event magazines such as *The New Yorker* were turning away from his brand of narrative" (Galef 30). Fortunately, the publication of *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), and other works showed Dahl that if an author "hits the jackpot with just one children's book, it's an income for life" (Dahl, quoted in West 1991, 65). Michel Tournier, who in France alone has sold over three million copies of *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage* (1971), also clearly recognized the lucrative potential of creating and/or marketing works for both adults and children. As Sandra Beckett explains, Tournier "unapologetically admits that he writes to be published, sold, and read as widely as possible" (1995, 10).

In the former Soviet Union, which gave birth to a particularly large number of adult/children's system authors, it was hardly a question of 'jackpots', but rather one of basic survival which motivated the search for alternate literary activities. Efim Etkind created a huge scandal in 1968 when in the preface to an anthology entitled *Masters of Russian Verse Translation* he "attributed the upsurge in Russian translation activity in the Soviet era to a heightening of ideological censorship which had pressed serious writers out of original writing and into translation" (Loseff 193). Lev Loseff notes that

> in the wake of this episode no one further dared draw attention to the analogous, and perhaps even more revealing, situation in Russian children's literature to which, ever since the 1920s and by reason of similar imperatives, the most prominent writers had extended their energies: Yesenin, Zoshchenko, Mandelstam, Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Platonov, Prishvin; members of the avant-garde group Oberiu—Vvedensky, Zabolotsky, Kharms—and such like-minded writers as Vladimirov, Oleynikov, and Shvarts (193).[7]

As Loseff argues, the guise of "innocent children's writer" was a very effective means of getting certain subversive ideas past the censors. In other words, while these authors might not have been able to publish all or many of their works for adults, they could infuse their children's literature with "Aesopian language" through which they very intentionally addressed parents or other adults who might be reading to a child.[8] At the same time, in the former USSR, children's literature served as an important means of artistic self-expression. For example, in his children's works Daniil Kharms was able to make use of many of the devices that we find in his subversive (and thus unpublished) literature for adults (Stone-Nakhimovsky 22 and 175 n. 29).

Under circumstances that were very different from those of their Soviet counterparts, other writers have similarly used children's literature

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[7]Journalism was also a common field for Soviet authors who could not publish their own literature for adults. And some, including Pasternak, Mandel'shtam, and Zoshchenko, combined translation or journalism with writing for children. See Geoffrey Hosking's *Beyond Socialist Realism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980) 2.

[8]See Chapter Seven of Loseff's *On the Beneficence of Censorship*: "Aesopian Language as a Factor in the Shaping of a Literary Genre." My third chapter is also on this intriguing topic.

as a means of self-expression or an aesthetic alternative to adult fiction. C.S. Lewis, for example, felt that there was something inherently valuable about children's literature. You write "a children's story because a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say: just as a composer might write a Dead March not because there was a public funeral in view but because certain musical ideas that had occured to him went best into that form" (C.S. Lewis 208). And Nina Bawden once explained how writing for children assisted her in writing for adults and vice versa:

> Writing about children you have to hold in your head what they will become when they are grown. Writing about adults, you must be able to see what they once were. You go back to the beginning so you can see how things became as they are. This is why I write as I do, alternately for adults and for children. I find the one kind of book feeds the other (6-7).

In a related case of switching literary activities, children's literature apparently helped to get Randall Jarrell out of the impasse created when, despite his previous successes, he was having difficulty writing poetry for adults in the early 1960s. Writing for children, "which had a salutary effect on his writing for adults... , resulted in at least two excellent children's books" (Flynn 87).[9]

For other writers, children's literature has been used not as a

[9]For more on Jarrell, see Jerome Griswold's *The Children's Books of Randall Jarrell* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1988).

periodical or temporary break from literature for adults, but as a way to escape from the adult system entirely, i.e., as a sort of haven. Isaac Bashevis Singer, the Nobel prize laureate who began to write for children late in his career, claimed that he wanted to find an audience of readers who were genuinely interested in a good story as compared to what he saw as his dull and pessimistic adult audience:

> I was driven to [write for children] by a deep disenchantment in the literary atmosphere of our epoch. I have convinced myself that while adult literature, especially fiction, is deteriorating, the literature for children is gaining in quality and stature... . No writer can bribe his way to the child's attention with false originality, literary puns and puzzles, arbitrary distortions of the order of things, or muddy streams of consciousness which often reveal nothing but a writer's boring and selfish personality. I came to the child because I see in him a last refuge from a literature gone beserk and ready for suicide (50).

Yet another reason for a turn to children's literature is that it can provide not only a break or a refuge from literature for adults, but also a mental return to childhood itself.[10] As Alan Garner has said about his desire to write children's books: it serves "to make myself live the life that in some way I was prevented from living as a child" (quoted in Chambers, 279). Very similar is Henri Bosco's explanation that he wrote his children's works "pour le plaisir de l'enfant qui survit en moi. J'écris

[10]The related issue of the return to childhood in autobiographical works is the focus of Richard N. Coe's *When the Grass was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984).

donc pour me souvenir en évoquant ses souvenirs" (quoted in Beckett 1997, 261). Notably, Bosco adds that he did not hesitate to create a fictionalized childhood superior to the original: "C'est de l'histoire, mais de l'histoire romancée. Car en me rappelant l'enfance que j'ai eue, je ne peux m'empêcher de rappeler aussi l'enfance qu'alors je rêvais quelquefois d'avoir—l'enfance que je n'avais pas" (Ibid).

From the above cases, it is apparent that most often it is the writer who takes the initiative to become a children's author. Michel Tournier explains, for example, that it was he himself who decided to write or publish most of his works for children: both those that were newly created, as well as the ones that are based on or excerpted from his adult fiction (Beckett 1997, 281-2). However, another possible reason for writing for children is that an author is specifically asked to do so. In the case of Tournier's short children's novel *La Couleuvrine* (1994), it was the journal *Je bouquine* that requested a submission from Tournier for its tenth anniversary edition (Beckett 1997, 285).

On the other hand, Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio says that it was completely someone else's idea that he should become a children's writer: Pierre Marchand, an editor at Gallimard and creator of Gallimard Jeunesse, suggested that some of Le Clézio's adult fiction be published (most often unaltered) for a junior readership because, as Marchand put it, "je crois que vous écrivez plutôt pour la jeunesse" (Beckett 1997, 293).[11] Joy Kogawa similarly informs me that it was an editor at

[11]The fact that Le Clézio and Tournier have published some of the same works for adults and children does not mean that they no longer could be considered to be

Oxford University Press, Richard Telecky, who asked her to create a children's book based on her award-winning novel *Obasan* (Letter to the author, 31 March 1995).[12] Likewise, members of the above-mentioned Russian literary group Oberiu were urged by Samuil Marshak, Nikolai Oleinikov, and Evgenii Shvarts to start working for the Children's Section of the State Publishing House.[13]

One final, very unique reason why an author might write for children is illustrated by the case of Jean Giono. He, too, was asked to create something for young readers, and *Le petit garçon qui avait envie d'espace* ended up being his only book written deliberately for children. But for Giono, the requestor was not an editor, but rather a Swiss chocolate maker! With each chocolate bar purchase, children had the chance to collect the twelve stickers which were to be affixed to the appropriate page in the book (Beckett 1997, 87-92).

0.5. Review of the Literature Concerning Adult/Children's System Authors

In the relatively young academic field of children's literature,

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adult/children's system authors. As I say earlier in my introduction, being a plural system author (or specifically an adult/children's system author) requires that the writer personally be involved in the creation and/or *publication* of works within more than one system.

[12]See also Kathleen Donohue's "'Free-Falling' and 'Serendipity'": An Interview with Joy Kogawa" in *Canadian Children's Literature* 84 (1996): 34-46.

[13]See Marshak's *Sobranie sochinenii* VII (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura 1971) 586 and also Elena Sokol's account of the creation of Marshak's children's journals in *Russian Poetry for Children* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1984) 125.

adult/children's system authors have been studied to only a limited degree, with little systematic or comparative analysis. In what follows, I would like to present a survey of what I have found that has been done up until 1997 and thereby situate my own contribution. Undoubtedly, it was some of the items which appeared before 1990 that first sparked my interest in the topic. And what has been published in the past several years, while I was already engaged in my research, has helped confirm the fact that there is a vast array of intriguing issues that can be considered regarding adult/children's system authors.

Bettina Hürlimann was apparently one of the first scholars to discuss authors who have written for children and adults as a matter worthy of much greater attention. In her above-mentioned chapter, "Men of Letters Write for Children," Hürlimann states concerning Lagerlöf, Kipling, Morgenstern, et al.:

> I should like to pay tribute to those people, often formally referred to as 'men of letters', who usually write their books for adults but who have persuaded their muse to spare some time for children. It is these writers who put a bit of spice into children's literature, which is all too often inclined to be somewhat stodgy. They provide an artistic standard against which the professional writer for children can measure himself; in short, they are a most necessary influence and we cannot have enough of them (256).

Given the great number of "great men [and women!] of letters" who have written for children, Hürlimann says that "naturally a subject like this

really requires a book to itself" (256). I could not agree more and have made doing an extended study of the topic my ultimate goal ever since I first read Hürlimann's words. However, in contrast to Hürlimann whose chapter is very cursory and anecdotal in nature, I see the need for rigorous and in-depth literary analysis. Furthermore, I feel that a theoretically-based introduction to the phenomenon of adult/children's system authors of the sort that I have offered above is particularly important, because neither Hürlimann nor anyone since has done such a thing.

Published almost thirty years after the original German version of Hürlimann's book, Zohar Shavit's *Poetics of Children's Literature* (1986) concerns in part adult/children's system authors. Shavit notably looks at the case of Roald Dahl, who transformed one of his stories for adults into a children's book (43-59). Shavit's comparison of the two versions of Dahl's tale provided me with an example of one possible way of studying authors who have written for a dual audience. And her work constitutes precisely the type of detailed analysis that is lacking in Hürlimann and many others as well. Shavit also has a useful chapter on "The Ambivalent Status of Texts" which helped lead me to the main focus of this dissertation. It appears that Shavit was the first to use the polysystem approach to describe various facets of the relationship between children's literature and literature for adults. It was as a result of reading her book that I myself decided to use Even-Zohar's work as the starting point for this study and thereby to employ polysystem theory in a way in

which it has thus far not been used (see note 1).

While Shavit's book is for the most part commendable,[14] one comment that she makes in the section on Dahl is highly questionable, i.e., he is very unique, since "not many writers write for both children and adults" (44).[15] Hürlimann's chapter, as well as assorted articles that predate the publication of *Poetics of Children's Literature*, reveals that the category is hardly as limited as Shavit leads her reader to believe. After first seeing Shavit and in preparation for my anticipated doctoral research, I began collecting the names of authors who have written for both children and adults. This search was aided greatly by my discovery of Marilyn Apseloff's *They Wrote For Children Too: An Annotated Bibliography of Children's Literature by Famous Writers for Adults* (1989). Apseloff proves that the number of adult/children's system authors is really quite large, and this bibliography only concerns those who either wrote in English or are available in translation.

While Apseloff's bibliography is most welcome, it does not take the

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[14]I find Peter Hunt's and Perry Nodelman's reviews of Shavit's *Poetics of Children's Literature* excessively scathing, although I do agree with some of their points. For example, Hunt is right to question Shavit's argument that blurring between fantasy and reality is somehow characteristic of an ambivalent text (Hunt 200), and both Hunt and Nodelman are justified in criticizing the book for certain factual errors and unanswered questions. See Perry Nodelman's "Signs of Confusion" in the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 11.4 (Winter 1986-7): 162-4 and Peter Hunt's review in the *International Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship* 3.3 (Winter 1988): 198-202.

[15]In her brief mention of authors who have written for children and adults, in contrast to Shavit, Margaret Marshall goes too far in the opposite direction when she claims that "the great majority of authors of children's books also write adult books" (24).

place of critical studies. In fact, in 1973 Apseloff herself had published an article entitled "Children's Books by Famous Writers for Adults." But, similar to Hürlimann's chapter, the latter involves basically just brief descriptions of children's works by Aldous Huxley, Arthur Millar, etc. These descriptions are reminiscent of the annotations found in Apseloff's bibliography.

Aside from Shavit's work, other more in-depth studies of individual authors (including Thackeray, Faulkner, cummings, Gertrude Stein) can be found in *The Lion and the Unicorn* 2.1 (1978), a "special issue on authors who write for children and adults." Some of the papers in this issue have to do with the relationship between the given author's children's literature and his or her literature for adults, something that is of great interest to me. For example, in "William Faulkner's *The Wishing Tree*: Maturity's First Draft," John Ditsky traces important "parallels between the children's book and the eventual series of adults writings on which the writer's reputation rests" and speculates about "the significance of *The Wishing Tree* to Faulkner's development as a novelist" (56).

A related collection, which appeared in 1990, has to do generally with the relationship between children's literature and literature for adults; it also includes discussions of several writers who have worked in the two domains. Edited by Dagmar Grenz, *Kinderliteratur--Literatur auch für Erwachsene? Zum Verhältnis von Kinderliteratur und Erwachsenenliteratur* consists of fifteen papers originally presented at

the eighth congress of The International Society for the Research of Children's Literature (IRSCL) in 1987 in Köln. The adult/children's system authors dealt with here include: Dahl (in a paper by Shavit which is obviously a version her previously-mentioned study); Gudrun Pausewang, Edmondo de Amicis, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. Of particular value to me is the paper on Hoffmann which is by Grenz herself.[16] Her analyis of Hoffman's writing leads her to the conclusion that there are no intrinsic differences between Hoffmann's *Kindermärchen* and his work addressed to an adult audience, and that the *Kindermärchen* can be read by both children and adults. Grenz's paper influenced me to consider how other authors of literature for adults similarly seek a plural audience for their children's works, and this question eventually became the central one in my research.

Another publication that has to do with my topic is Volume 25 of *Children's Literature*, a special issue on "Cross-Writing Child and Adult" (1997) which, as editors U.C. Knoepflmacher and Mitzi Myers write, concerns authors who have created "a dialogic mix of older and younger voices... in texts too often read as univocal" (vii).[17] Among the adult/children's system authors featured in this compilation are: Wilhelm

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[16]Elsewhere Grenz has written about another adult/children's system author. See "Erich Kästners Kinderbücher in ihren Verhältnis zu seiner Literatur für Erwachsene," published in *Literatur für Kinder*, Hrsg. Maria Lypp. (Götingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1977) 155-69.

[17]The term "cross-writing" was notably used in the title of a session at the 1993 Convention of the Modern Language Assocation (Beckett 1995, 31). The full title of the session was "Crosswriting Child and Adult: Fictions with Dual Readerships, Authors with Double Audiences." Sandra Beckett (see below) was one of the participants.

Hauff, Rudyard Kipling, and E. Nesbit. Especially interesting from my perspective is Maureen Thum's work on Hauff as presented in "Misreading the Cross-Writer: The Case of Wilhelm Hauff's *Dwarf Long Nose*." Thum looks at an author who, similar to the Soviet authors whom I will be looking at in Chapter Three, wrote his double-voiced literary fairy tales under conditions of censorship. Also worthy of note is Lorraine Janzen Kooistra's "Goblin Market as a Cross-Audienced Poem" which is about how alterations to paratextual features can make the same text address children vs. adults. This article helped me to consider such factors in relation to my authors' publications.

Over the past two decades other scattered scholarly articles on adult/children's system authors have appeared in various journals, and these have likewise assisted me in my work. For example, Joseph McMahon's article entitled "Michel Tournier's Texts for Children" (1985) has to do with certain key differences between Tournier's works that have been published for children and those that are exclusively for adults. It was reading McMahon's article which made me decide to include Tournier in my dissertation (see Chapter Four). Janet Lewis's "*The Cat and the Devil* and *Finnegans Wake*" (1992) considers the numerous connections between the novel and the former work, a retelling of an old tale which Joyce sent to his grandson in the form of a letter in 1936. The extensive intertextuality that Lewis explores in Joyce led me to look for similar things in the works of my authors. Judith Plotz's article on Salman Rushdie, "*Haroun* and the Politics of Children's Literature"

(1995), concerns how adults who know about Rushdie's controversial literature for adults, as well as Khomeini's *fatwa*, would read *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* as a sort of apologia. Plotz's article made me think, in particular, about my Soviet authors who, like Rushdie and also the above-mentioned Hauff, wrote their children's works under a specific set of oppressive socio-political circumstances. Furthermore, Plotz reminded me that in any (adult) analysis of children's literature—and particularly in the case of adult/children's system authors—a distinction has to be drawn between the sort of reading an adult can perform vs. what is accessible to children.

The issue of child vs. adult readings is likewise the focus of another article which I found especially valuable: Emer O'Sullivan's "The Fate of the Dual Addressee in the Translation of Children's Literature" (1993). Here, O'Sullivan examines elements of A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* that are addressed to adult readers and how these elements were lost in German translation.

Another noteworthy article on my topic which I have already discussed above is David Galef's "Crossing Over: Authors Who Write Both Children's and Adults' Fiction" (1995). Galef was apparently the first person since Hürlimann and Apseloff to discuss individuals who have written for the two audiences as a particular phenomenon worthy of greater scholarly attention.[18] As I have explained, Galef categorizes

[18] I have just found someone else who considers this topic: Marian Allsobrook whose "Major Authors' Work for Children" concerns almost exclusively British authors and has only very short descriptions of each one. It is an entry in Peter Hunt's *Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996) 410-421.

writers in terms of when they happen to write for their junior readership. And he describes certain connections and divergences that exist between Dahl's, Hoban's, and Milne's children's literature and their works for adults. While Galef limits his study to three English-language authors and only has the space to deal with each one briefly, he provides a helpful typology which I have expanded above to reflect my own findings concerning authors from a number of different national literatures.

A small number of dissertations and monographs have also been written on adult/children's system authors, and these, too, have had a role to play in my research. For example, Celia Catlett Anderson's "Style in Children's Literature: A Comparison of Passages from Books for Adults and for Children" (U of Rhode Island, 1984) reports on Anderson's comparative statistical computer analyses of passages from the children's literature and the fiction for adults of Nathaniel Hawthorne, George MacDonald, Oscar Wilde, and John Gardner. Christopher Anderson's dissertation, "Michel Tournier's Children: Myth, Reader, Intertext" (U of Iowa, 1990) has to do with a wide range of issues such as the myth of childhood, intertextuality between and within Tournier's works for children and adults, rewriting literature for a junior audience, etc.[19] Among the monographs that have appeared are: Jerome Griswold's *The Children's Books of Randall Jarrell* (1988), Mark West's *Roald Dahl* (1992), and Elisabeth Stuck's *Hanna Johansen: Eine Studie zum erzählerischen Werk 1978-1995* (1997), all of which have something to

[19]Christopher Anderson's dissertation was recently published as a book entitled *Michel Tournier's Children: Myth, Intertext, Initiation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).

do with the connections between these authors' writing for children and writing for adults.

Incidentally, in *Walter Benjamin for Children: An Essay on His Radio Years* (1993), Jeffrey Mehlman looks at a related case of someone who has produced specifically *non-fictional* works for both adults and children. It turns out that Benjamin, the critic and cultural theorist for adults, also wrote radio scripts for children. Mehlman discusses the intertextual relationships between Benjamin's children's talks, which were broadcast from 1929-1933, and the philosophical and theological concerns of Benjamin's adult works. Mehlman's book made me realize that adult/children's system authors can be seen as part of a larger group of all those (e.g., non-fiction writers, composers, artists, etc.) who have created works for both child and adult audiences and who can likewise be studied with the goal of exploring this plural production in terms of intersections, transfers, or the absence of such things.

The most recent book to appear on my topic is Sandra Beckett's *De grands romanciers écrivent pour les enfants* (1997), which I am very pleased to be able to include in my discussion. Beckett looks at five French authors (Henri Bosco, Jean Giono, Michel Tournier, Marguerite Yourcenar, and Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio) and includes transcriptions of her interviews with Tournier and Le Clézio, as well as an excerpt from Bosco's diary concerning his children's literature.[20] In the book Beckett

[20]Beckett has published related papers in English on Bosco and Tournier. "Crosswriting Child and Adult: Henri Bosco's *L'Enfant et la rivière*" appeared in the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 21.4 (1996-7): 189-98, and "From the Art of Rewriting for Children to the Art of Crosswriting Child and Adult: The Secret of Michel

offers detailed readings of texts that were written and/or published for children, frequently using in her discussions commentary provided by the authors themselves and bringing to her readings a knowledge of each author's œuvre as a whole. Beckett finds that the "great authors" she looks at all engage in cross-writing, creating (children's) works which involve "un va-et-vient entre un public adulte et un public enfantin" (Beckett 14) and which therefore transcend or transgress the borders between children's literature and literature for adults, as well as between child and adult.

While the vast majority of scholarship on adult/children's system authors concerns individuals—or occasionally a number of individuals representing the same national literature (see Beckett) or linguistic group (see Galef)—as a comparativist, I feel the need to go beyond such boundaries. In my work, I notably use primary and secondary works in French, Russian, German, and English, as well as mention many authors who have written in other languages. My principal goal in this dissertation is specifically to compare the children's literature of five adult/children's system authors (three Russian and two French).

As far as my main focus is concerned, I would like to recall the beginning of this introduction. I mentioned that the different literatures of an individual plural system author's "microsystem" can either be characterized by transfers, crossovers, etc. etc. (interference) or by the

Tournier's Dual Readership" was published in *Voices from Far Away: Current Trends in International Children's Literature Research*, ed. Maria Nikolajeva (Stockholm: Centre for the Study of Childhood Culture, Stockholm U, 1995) 9-34.

enforcement of boundaries (non-interference). With regards to adult/children's system authors in particular, it is possible to establish two main poles concerning the relationship between an author's literature for adults and his or her children's literature. On the one hand, there can be an enforcement of boundaries with little or no evidence of intertextual transfers, borrowings, etc. from one literature to the other. Someone who represents this pole is Margaret Atwood whose most recent children's book, *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut* (1995), like her earlier works *Anna's Pet* (1980) and *Up in the Tree* (1978), does not appear to have any connection to her fiction and poetry for older readers. Regarding *Princess Prunella*, incidentally, Atwood's assistant, Sarah Cooper, informs me that it came out of a word game that Atwood used to play with her daughter (Letter to the author, 27 May 1997).

The second pole, on the other hand, is represented by adult/children's system authors whose children's literature intersects with their literature for adults, making their child and adult audiences merge. The above-mentioned works by Shavit (especially "The Ambivalent Status of Texts"), Ditsky (on Faulkner), Grenz (on Hoffmann), Thum (on Hauff), Plotz (on Rushdie), O'Sullivan (on Milne), and Beckett—as well as my own analyses—have led me to pay particular attention to authors who are located near this second pole. While my own research and that of others has suggested a certain correlation between the fact of being a member of the adult system and the tendency to write specifically ambivalent children's literature, further research would need to be done to determine whether the correlation is indicative of causality; i.e., whether the

correlation is indeed a result of an interference between an author's adult and children's works, or if the correlation may be due to other factors. For example, the age of the intended audience may have some bearing on the way a work is written, and the writer's own beliefs about what children can or cannot, should or should not be exposed to may also have some influence on the nature of the product. Furthermore, perhaps just the fact that certain writers may read more literature for adults—or particular kinds of literature—may explain the correlation. I am fully aware that in order to prove my hypothesis about interference of systems, all of these—and no doubt other factors as well—would have to be ruled out, and this would require different kinds of research methodologies.

At the same time, one would need to determine if authors who write exclusively for children also produce dual-audienced works. Also, it would be interesting to investigate if authors of literature for adults produce texts intended for an audience of both child and adult readers more frequently than do single system children's authors. My hypothesis that this is indeed the case will also need to be subjected to testing, and this, too, will require a methodology very different from the one I have adopted in this dissertation. Should future research indicate that a high percentage of both single and dual system authors produce ambivalent children's works, the nature of the correlation I have discerned will need to be reconsidered. Hopefully my own work will inspire others to develop the methodologies required to test my hypothesis, to explore the nature of the correlation I have observed, and to undertake studies that would seek

to answer these and related questions.

Such works as I will be focusing on can be seen specifically as ones which fall somewhere "between literary systems." This is precisely the sort of literature that Hans-Heino Ewers describes in the opening paper of Grenz's book: "Das doppelsinnige Kinderbuch: Erwachsene als Mitleser und Leser von Kinderliteratur." [The Children's Book with a Double Meaning: The Adult as Mediator and Reader of Children's Literature]. Ewers explains the following about ambiguous or ambivalent children's texts which contain elements directed at both the child and the adult as true readers:

> Doppelsinnige Kinderbücher markieren einen Bereich, in dem Kinderliteratur und Allgemeinliteratur sich überschneiden, ja geradezu interferieren. Ihnen kommt deshalb eine besondere kulturelle Bedeutung zu: Kindliche und erwachsene Leser vereinigen sich hier in der Lektüre ein und desselben Textes. So verschieden ihre jeweilige Lektüre auch ausfallen mag, sie erleben doch ein Stück literarischer Gemeinsamkeit über die Altersgrenzen hinweg. Doppelsinnige Kinderbücher sind Berühungs- und Vereinigungspunkte von Kinder- und Erwachsenenliteratur, auf die es gerade dem kinderliterarischen Bereich in besonderer Weise ankommen sollte (23).
>
> [Children's books which work on both of these levels mark an area in which children's literature and general literature overlap or even interfere with each other. For this reason they have a particular cultural significance: young and adult readers come together here in the reading of one and the same text. As different as their respective readings may be, they experience a degree of literary commonality that goes

> beyond the bounds of generations. Such books establish contact and communication between children's literature and literature for adults, which is especially significant for the field of children's literature].

In order to expand on the preexisting scholarship and to illustrate further this phenomenon of ambivalence that represents one of the ways adult/children's system authors can write for children, I am approaching my topic from the perspective of reader-oriented theories, which have to do generally with how "readers participate in the construction of meaning" (Rabinowitz 401). In an attempt to understand how acts of reading could vary between children and adults, I will construct images of "competent" child and adult readers, demonstrating how each might make sense of the works in question. The "competent" reader has to do with Jonathan Culler's notion of "literary competence" and refers to someone who is able to read a literary text with a knowledge of language and literature in general, of different codes and conventions, of specific texts, and of the world and culture, etc. The author can thus be seen to write a work with an awareness of the possible reader's literary competence—or, in the case of the authors I am concerned with, an awareness of both the child and adult readers' competence—and with this awareness, the writer aims to write to produce the desired effect (see Culler 113-130). By juxtaposing child and adult readers and readings, I aim to provide evidence for my hypothesis that the works under consideration are indeed ambivalent. Furthermore, by taking a reader-oriented perspective, I will

also contribute to this scholarship by presenting a view of the unique communicative situation involved in ambivalent literature.

In Chapter One I will discuss in more detail the concept of ambivalence and the phenomenon of the "plural intended reader," as well as present my methodology. Next, I will present the adult/children's system authors, arranged chronologically according to their birthdates. The focus of Chapter Two will be the Russian writers Kornei Chukovskii (1882-1969), Mikhail Zoshchenko (1895-1958), and Daniil Kharms (1905-42). Their particular extraliterary circumstances resulted in the creation of a particular—and particularly daring—type of ambivalent address. In Chapter Three I will look at Eugène Ionesco (1912-94) whose *Contes*, although originally created for his young daughter, Marie-France, are characterized by much ambivalent address on the level of the text, and this form of address notably continues on the level of the paratext, particularly in illustrations by the incomparable Étienne Delessert. In Chapter Four I will explore the fascinating case of Michel Tournier (1924-), who first became a children's author by rewriting one of his novels and publishing it as a children's book. Subsequently, Tournier became a fervent creator and advocate of ambivalent literature, works that are for children and adults from the outset.

Chapter One

Ambivalence and the Plural Reader

1.1. What Adult/Children's System Authors Say About Plural Readership

Aside from what I have presented in my introduction, one additional reason authors might have for deciding to write for children is that, in their opinion, this activity is similar to or even the same as writing for adults. If we listen to what adult/children's system authors have to say about plural readership, we see that many of them strive for some sort of fusion between children's literature and literature for adults. Rosemary Sutcliff explains, for example: "I have never written for any age-group at all, but merely for myself... . The themes of my children's books are mostly quite adult, and in fact the difference between writing for children and for adults is, to me at any rate, only a quite small gear change" (quoted in Townsend 1971, 201). For Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, however, there need not even be a 'gear change'. Although he thinks that literature for very young children is a distinct category, Le Clézio otherwise believes in the conflation of literatures and seeks in his works to "[s]'adresser à tout le monde" (quoted in Beckett 1997, 197). And we can find countless other such statements. George MacDonald, for example, addresses his books to 'the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five" (quoted in McGillis, 2). Similarly, in the "prière d'insérer" to *Les*

contes du chat perché Marcel Aymé writes: "Ces contes ont été écrits pour les enfants âgés de quatre à soixante-quinze ans. Il va sans dire que par cet avis, je ne songe pas à décourager les lecteurs qui se flatteraient d'avoir un peu de plomb dans la tête. Au contraire, tout le monde est invité" (Aymé 7).

On the other hand, it may not be *children* 'from four or five to 75' whom an author desires for his or her readership, but rather "adults" who range from early school-age all the way to well past retirement. In such cases the writer is expecting that (at least certain) children will have a literary competence that is greater than what is typical for readers in their age group and/or that children will be challenged to adopt a reading skill and style many notches above what they use normally. As Alan Garner explains: "Most of the people who read my books are adults, whatever their ages" (quoted in N. Lewis, x). Michel Tournier likewise claims that he truly only writes for adults, but that at the brightest moments, when his literary skills are at their peak, his works can include younger readers, too. We read the following in Tournier's afterword to *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit*: "Je n'écris pas de livres pour enfants, mais il m'arrive de tellement m'appliquer et d'avoir tant de talent que ce que j'écris puisse être lu aussi par les enfants. Quand ma plume est moins heureuse, ce qu'elle trace est tout juste bon pour les adultes" (Tournier 1979a, n.p.).[1]

[1]Peter Hunt comments that "the many pious remarks from authors that books for children should be better than those for adults seems to me to be misplaced positive discrimination" (1994, 18). I feel, however, that we have no reason to doubt the sincerity of such perspectives. Besides, in the case of Tournier at least, the issue is not that books for children should be superior to ones for adults but that ones which appeal to both

Using, among others, the above quotation from Sutcliff, Zohar Shavit argues that it is the "poor self-image of children's literature" which leads writers to "the denial of a particular addressee (the child) and the denial of any distinction between writing for adults and writing for children" (1986, 41). But I would say that it is not possible to deduce with any certainty that such statements come out of an individual's embarrassment related to writing and/or being published for the (supposedly) inferior system. Rather, authors can truly feel that texts for both readerships are possible and that the line separating children and adults should not be a fixed one—or maybe it should not exist at all.

In this way, certain adult/children's system authors can be seen to uphold the ideal of shared literature which predates the creation of a distinctive children's system and has continued to exist as a literary option. In accordance with Yuri Lotman's view that culture is a "set of texts and a *non-hereditary collective memory*" (Eco 1990, xi), we can thus say that, although in the eighteenth century "new boundaries between adult and children's readership were drawn" (Shavit 1990, 421) as the system of children's literature emerged, and the majority of children's literature since that time has served to enforce the boundary, our 'collective memory' also includes works meant for "shared reading sessions with adults" (Shavit 1990, 418). Notably, some academics who have written for children, like J.R.R. Tolkien and Lewis Carroll, have also been inclined to create this sort of shared or ambivalent literature.

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audiences represent a tremendous achievement.

1.2. The Notion of Ambivalence

In order to present her discussion of ambivalent texts, e.g., *Alice in Wonderland*, *Winnie-the-Pooh*, *The Little Prince*, etc., Shavit borrows Lotman's notion of ambivalence.[2] But she reduces its scope and range

> in order to apply it to one specific case only: texts that synchronically (yet dynamically, not statically) maintain an ambivalent status in the literary polysystem. These texts belong simultaneously to more than one system and consequently are read differently (though concurrently), by at least two groups of readers. Those groups of readers diverge in their expectations, as well as in their norms and habits of reading. Hence their realization of the same text will be greatly different (Shavit 1986, 66).

While I find that Shavit's view essentially matches my own, there is one important statement she makes that I would contest. Shavit believes that ambivalent texts are meant to "appeal primarily to adults, using the child as an excuse rather than as a real addressee" (1986, 63). However, I see that the child addressee can certainly be accorded an equal, if not a more

[2]In "The Dynamic Model of a Semiotic System" Lotman credits Bakhtin for being the first to assess ambivalence as a cultural-semiotic phenomenon (204). Maria Nikolajeva notes that the notion of "duplex fiction," which is similar to Shavit's ambivalent texts, "has been independently proposed in Sweden by Danuta Zadworna-Fjellestad" (1996, 57). Zadworna-Fjellestad's book is entitled *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Gravity's Rainbow: A Study in Duplex Fiction* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1986). A related perspective is that of Barbara Wall in *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1991). Wall speaks of "double" (i.e., speaking over the head of the child) and "dual" address (i.e., writing equally to the child and the adult) specifically with regards to the relationship between the narrator and the narratee of a given text.

important role than the adult. And adult and child readers can truly coincide in such works, at least partially.

As I have already mentioned in my introduction, someone else who has done some very interesting work on the question of ambivalent texts—or what he calls "das doppelsinnige Kinderbuch" [the children's book with a double meaning]—is Hans-Heino Ewers.[3] Ewers distinguishes specifically two ways in which an adult can be inscribed in a children's book. First, an adult can be the "Mitleser" (the go-between or mediator) who reads in order to see whether a book meets his or her expectations of what a children's book should be: "Ein kinderliterarischer Text hat neben den Erwartungen der kindlichen Leser stets auch die der erwachsenen Mitleser zu erfüllen" (Ewers 15). [A text which belongs to children's literature must not only fulfil the expectations of the young reader but also those of the adult reader who is reading along]. In the past the adult *Mitleser* was often addressed directly in the preface or afterword: "Von alters her hat das Vor-bzw. Nachwort die Funktion besessen, den mitlesenden erwachsenen Vermittlern die Gewißheit zu verschaffen, daß es sich um ein Kinderbuch handelt, welches ihrer Auffassung von Kinderliteratur gerecht wird" (Ewers 17). [The preface or afterword has always had the function of reassuring adult readers that this is indeed a children's book which agrees with their conception of children's literature]. Now, however, the "unofficial" adult addressee is

[3]In her article entitled "The Fate of the Dual Addressee in the Translation of Children's Literature" *New Comparison* 16 (1993): 109-19, Emer O'Sullivan briefly discusses Shavit's notion of ambivalent texts in relation to Ewers's concept of the "doppelsinnige Kinderbuch." See specifically pp. 109-111.

acknowledged in a much less overt way, but every author, nonetheless, writes his or her children's book knowing that it will be bought, reviewed favorably, recommended by librarians, approved of by parents, etc. only if the demands/requirements of these co-readers are met (e.g., in terms of educational, psychological, literary values, etc.).

On the other hand, Ewers sees that there also exists a sort of "children's" literature which is directed simultaneously to adults as well. This makes the adult a genuine reader in addition to a mediator. Using the example of the *Kunstmärchen* [literary fairy tales] by such Romantic authors as Tieck, Brentano, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Ewers explains:

> Vorstellbar ist eine Literatur, die von Kindern wie von Erwachsenen herangezogen, von beiden aber auf eine ganz unterschiedliche Weise gelesen wird. Es handelte sich hierbei um eine doppelbödige, um eine doppelsinnige Literatur, die die nicht mehr auszuradierende Differenz zwischen der literarischen Formensprache des Kindes und der Erwachsenen in sich aufgenommen hätte und in sich reproduzierte (20).
>
> [One can imagine a type of literature which is read by children and adults alike, but very differently by each group. We would be dealing here with a kind of literature which has a double standard, a double meaning, one which has combined the undeniable difference between the literary language of children and adults and reproduced it in each text].

As I do, Ewers notably criticizes Shavit for suggesting that in

ambivalent texts, the child is just 'an excuse': "Wo sie aber die Balance wahrt, ist die doppelsinnige Kinderliteratur, wie ich meine, mit nicht weniger Ernst und Entschlossenheit an Kinder gerichtet, als es bei normalen Kinderbüchern der Fall ist" (Ewers 22). [I believe that this kind of children's literature, which works on both levels (the adult and the child level) is as serious and as determined to reach children as is ordinary children's literature]. At the same time, Ewers also criticizes the many children's literature critics who view ambiguous or ambivalent texts as somehow illicit because they are not solely for children. Ewers firmly believes that these texts constitute a very important area of study: "Dennoch bedarf es immer wieder neuer Berührungspunkte in Gestalt von Erwachsenenbüchern, die Kinder, und Kinderbüchern, die Erwachsene fesseln" (24). [Nonetheless, we need ever new points of contact in the form of adult books which fascinate children, and children's books which fascinate adults].

In order to consider the unique communication situation involved in ambivalent/*doppelsinnige*/cross-written or cross-read texts, I think that it would be helpful at this point to take a turn in the direction of reader-oriented studies.

1.3. The Plural Intended Reader

While much has been done in reader-oriented scholarship concerning works which are produced by an (adult) author for an adult readership, there are no reader-oriented studies that concern the phenomenon of ambivalent (children's) literature. Many of those who are interested in

the reader describe the author as creating a work with a certain theoretical audience in mind. For example, Gerald Prince says regarding the "virtual reader":

> Every author... develops his narrative as a function of a certain type of reader whom he bestows with certain qualities, faculties, and inclinations according to his opinion of men in general (or in particular) and according to the obligations he feels should be respected (9).

Peter Rabinowitz, similarly, writes that an author

> cannot begin to fill up a blank page without making assumptions about the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions. As a result, authors are forced to guess; they design their books rhetorically for some more or less specific *hypothetical* audience, which I call the *authorial audience* (1987, 21).

From my experience with ambivalent texts, however, I see the necessity to speak not of a virtual reader or the authorial audience, but of virtual reader*s* or authorial audience*s*, or perhaps the *plural intended reader*.[4] The three constituent parts of such a composite reader that

[4]In response to my query about this issue, Rabinowitz explains that he has written a little about the phenomenon of writing for a "multiple audience" in his new book *Authorizing Readers* (New York: Teachers College P, 1998), co-authored by Michael Smith. See Chapter 8 in which Rabinowitz briefly considers Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, a work which, by its inclusion of Spanish, "empowers my Spanish-speaking students" (150) while addressing Anglophones as the non-empowered, excluded group. Rabinowitz also mentions the possibility of Black writers writing

have to be taken into consideration in order for us to appreciate how ambivalent texts can arise and function are: the child reader, the external adult reader, and the "author as reader," all of whom can be seen to consist of both child(like) and adult(like) sides. Both of these sides must somehow be addressed in order for a text to qualify as ambivalent.

1.3.1. The Author as Reader of His/Her Own Ambivalent Texts

The full version of the above quotation by Prince begins as follows: "Every author, *provided he is writing for someone other than himself*, develops his narrative as a function of a certain type of reader... (9, my italics). But what if the author is writing for himself or herself as a great many adult/children's system authors claim they do? As Joanne Golden notes:

> The distinction between the author and reader is blurred in that the author is his/her own first reader. The author discovers his/her own meaning through the process of writing. In Derrida's view, the written sign is received rather than sent and 'the act of reading perforates the act of speaking or writing'" (74).

Since every adult author was once a child, it is understandable how we might get "cross-writing" or an author's "colloquy between past and present selves" (Knoepflmacher and Myers vii). For example, Sandra

simultaneously for Black and White readers (Letter to the author, 1 May 1998).

Beckett quotes Henri Bosco who writes in his diary about the writer: "De l'enfant qu'il a été il reste forcément en lui quelque chose" (1997, 252). As I have explained in my introduction, it is often children, young relatives, pupils, or friends who help an author forge a link with his or her own childhood self and influence the creation of works that the author might have enjoyed in his or her youth and can still enjoy today and forever.

An ambivalent text can thus be seen as the result of an author's attempt to create a connection to the self as child, as well as to the self as adult author/reader. The author's present self, which is obviously highly familiar with his or her own texts for adults, might, for example, create certain intertextual relationships that he or she would see, but that young readers could not likely appreciate. This intertextuality can also have to do with other literature for adults as opposed to the author's own. Another possibility is that the author might insert into a children's story philosophical layers or allusions to a particular reality that would similarly be over the heads of many or most children, but which, like the above intertextuality, would enhance the reading/writing pleasure of the (adult) author.

1.3.2. The External Adult Reader

That adult/children's system authors should create ambivalent texts can be related not only to the fact that they might be in contact with children and/or they desire to address their own child selves, as well as their adult selves, but also that they are well aware of the fact that other

adults will likely read their "children's" works, too. It is a fact that in early childhood and beyond "children... do not read; they are read to" (Appleyard 21). Aside from this, adults are, of course, involved in children's literature in countless other ways:

> It is... published by adults, reviewed and recommended by adults. Adult librarians administer children's books, teachers use and encourage the use of them, they are purchased by parents, uncles, aunts etc. This mediating role of adults is a vital one—without it children would have no literature—but a children's book which does not gain adult approval—whatever their criteria for a 'good' or 'appropriate' book at that time and in that culture may be—has a harder time making its way to the young addressees (O'Sullivan 109).

While a famous author's name on the cover of a book would mean very little to a child, it would mean much more to an adult and may even be the main reason he or she would decide to publish, review, buy, read, or pass the work on to children in the first place. An adult/children's system author may even consciously think about the possibility that 'adult approval' might best be gained if he or she creates works that are somehow ambivalent. The author may thus envisage an adult reader who, like the author himself or herself, would appreciate philosophical layers, allusions, etc. For example, Hans Christian Andersen, who penned novels and plays in addition to his numerous tales and stories, once wrote to a friend regarding his *Fairy Tales for Children*: "Now I tell stories of my

own accord, seize an idea for the adults—and then tell it for the children while still keeping in mind the fact that mother and father are often listening too, and they must have a little something for thought" (quoted in Cech 1987, 16).

The external adult reader may furthermore be expected by the author to be at least somewhat familiar with that author's œuvre for adults. As Rabinowitz explains, (adult) readers know that "the appropriate background group for a given text usually includes the previous works by the same author" (1987, 71). And writers no doubt write knowing that readers know this. Particularly if the author writes his or her children's works after or intermittently with the literature for adults, then he or she can anticipate that adult readers would want to see certain intertextual connections or otherwise to be made part of the hypothetical readership.

As is the case of the author who is his or her own reader, the external adult reader was also, of course, once a child and may remain childlike or might, at least occasionally, want to return to this state. Therefore, the author might believe that the external adult reader will enjoy not only that which is *not* fully or at all accessible to children (which may constitute only a part of the text), but also that which is for the junior readership, too (see Aymé and MacDonald above). Frequently, it is the case that adult/children's system authors make interesting departures from traditional children's literature (e.g., in terms of narration, characters, genres, themes, etc.), i.e., they create those "spicy" works that Hürlimann describes (256). Adult readers would see these departures against the background of their own childhood readings and/or the literature that

they have been recently reading to their own children.

Furthermore, against the backdrop of modern literature for adults, with its complicated *nouveau roman* and similar genres, addressing adults in works that appear to have the simplicity of children's narratives can represent something new and original in "un système où rareté et différence sont des critères premiers" (Dubois 105). Or, returning to the case of the Soviet writers, what looks like innocent children's literature can be meant to give pleasure in and of itself: to adults and children alike. But, at the same time, the "Aesopian children's literature" that I will be looking at in Chapter Two addresses adult readers as adults, concealing messages that they—but hopefully not adult censors—would find.

1.3.3. The Child Reader

Last, but certainly not least, is the child reader whom the author may envisage as being very young or somewhat older, quite mature or rather immature, possessing very little or a lot in the way of literary competence, etc. Barbara Wall writes that "by children I mean boys and girls up to the age of twelve or thirteen" (1), and I am inclined to agree with this delimitation. If an author envisages older/more competent/more mature children, then the fact that the work can be intended or marketed for adults, too, may come as less of a surprise than if the children are seen as being much younger/less competent/less mature. However, Ionesco's *Contes pour enfants de moins de trois ans* provide a good example of how very young children can be inscribed right alongside adult readers.

I said above that an author may write knowing that the external adult reader will take into consideration that author's œuvre for adults, other children's literature, or the literature for adults of a given period (e.g., the *nouveau roman*). Or the external adult reader can be expected to read a certain work in a certain way depending on a given sociopolitical context (e.g., Soviet Russia). All of this has to do with what Hans-Robert Jauss calls the "horizon of expectations" (*Erwartungshorizont*), "the set of cultural, ethical, and literary (generic, stylistic, thematic) expectations of a work's readers in the historical moment of its appearance, [which are] the basis on which the work was both produced and received (Suleiman 35).[5]

Undoubtedly, adult/children's system authors can expect child readers, too, to receive texts against their own horizon of expectations. While they will not know the "background group" (Rabinowitz 1987, 71) of an author's literature for adults, child readers would perhaps know the author's other children's literature, and the child reading Ionesco's *Conte numéro 2* after reading *Conte numéro 1*, for example, would see some interesting intertextual connections. Like an adult reader, the child might also be expected to have read a certain amount of other children's literature or be familiar with certain key cultural myths. Thus, a reading of Michel Tournier's *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage* demands at least a passive knowledge of Robinson Crusoe, if not a familiarity with Defoe's

[5]See Hans Robert Jauss's *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1982) which was first published in German as *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Munich: Fink, 1977).

novel itself or a children's version or film adaptation of the story.

While authors may feel that in terms of life and literary experience the hypothetical child reader is distinguishable from an adult reader, the child of any age is always on the path toward becoming an adult. As Nicholas Tucker writes in the concluding chapter of *What is a Child?*, childhood is an "apprenticeship to society: childhood is a period where the individual learns about the total, adult environment that he has been born into, and where he prepares himself for his own place within it" (101). Chris Jenks similarly draws attention to the important fact that childhood is namely a time when adults work to prepare children for adulthood:

> Simply stated, the child is familiar to us and yet strange, he inhabits our world and yet seems to answer to another, he is essentially of ourselves and yet appears to display a different order of being: his serious purpose and our intentions towards him are meant to resolve that paradox by transforming him into an adult, like ourselves (9-10).

As Garner and Tournier try to do (see above), an adult/children's system author may write with the goal of pulling child readers toward or contributing to their initiation into inevitable adulthood. Simultaneously, the author may aim to entice young readers to become future readers of literature for adults and specifically to take a keen interest someday in the adult literature of the author in question.[6] In addition, the author may believe that child readers will catch glimmers of adult ideas such as the

[6]This is one of the conclusions drawn by Christopher Anderson in his dissertation "Michel Tournier's Children: Myth, Reader, Intertext." See pp. 213-14.

philosophical layers mentioned above, although a full understanding might only be achieved if they return to the texts years or decades later.[7]

Thus, there are three main hypothetical readers of ambivalent texts, all of whom are adults or future adults, and children or former children. To illustrate the phenomenon of address in ambivalent texts, it is helpful to use Jakobson's well-known communication scheme. But instead of it being the case that "the addresser sends a message to the addressee" (Jakobson 353), it is rather a matter of sending messages to some combination of child and adult (or childlike and adultlike) addressees:

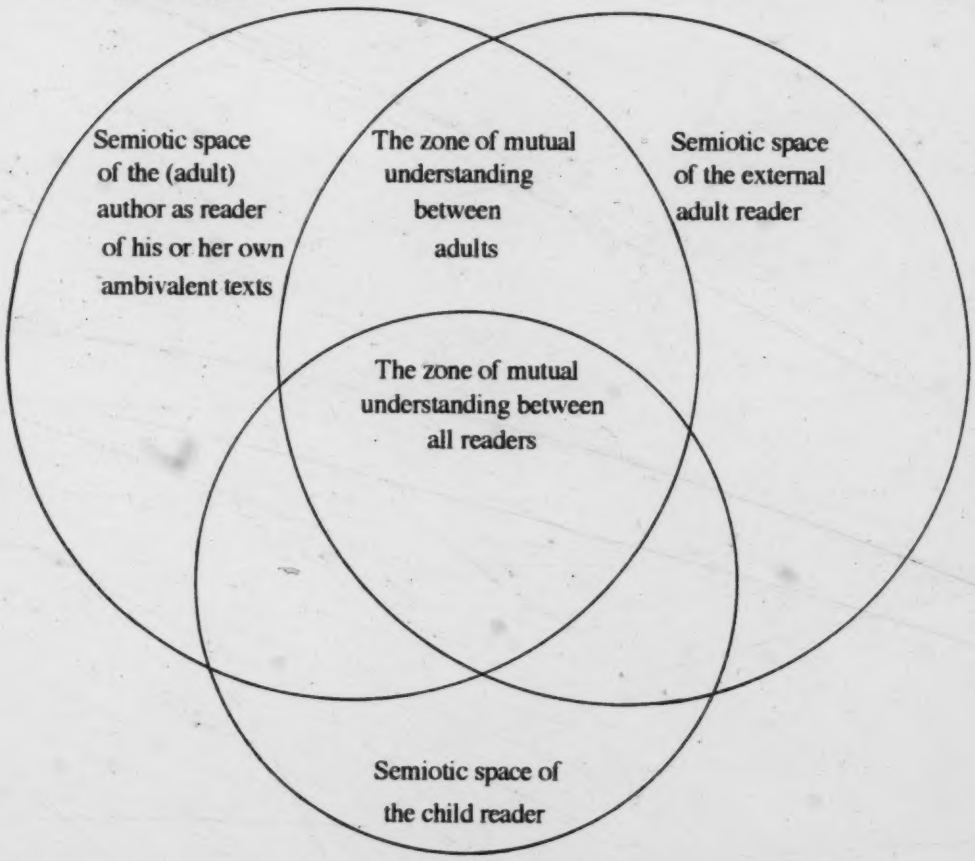
		Context	**Addressee**=Addresser=Author
Addresser	-------	Messages	------ **Addressee**=External Adult
		Contact	**Addressee**=Child
		Code	

Since the addressees may completely share, partially share, or not share the same context and code, it is furthermore beneficial to view Jakobson's scheme alongside a version of Lotman's semiotic model of communication, which concerns specifically the semiosphere or "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages" (Lotman 1990, 123).[8] The semiotic spaces of the adult author as reader

[7]See, for example, Michel Tournier's comment on the philosophical voices which reverberate through his *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit*. Tournier maintains that although the child reader does not know the origin of the voices, "il le sent, et il le comprend à sa manière" (quoted in Beckett 1997, 157). Elsewhere Tournier suggests that it is up to an adult co-reader to explain things to the child as the two read together (Bouloumié et de Gandillac, 304).

[8]In her book, *Children's Literature Comes of Age* (New York: Garland, 1996),

and of the external adult reader can be seen to intersect, and both intersect with the semiotic space of the child reader. But all semiotic spaces are also, in part, separate:


Semiotic space of the (adult) author as reader of his or her own ambivalent texts
The zone of mutual understanding between adults
Semiotic space of the external adult reader
The zone of mutual understanding between all readers
Semiotic space of the child reader

Maria Nikolajeva uses Lotman's model of communication to discuss the interaction of contexts in the translation of children's literature, ignoring "the difference between the author's (adult) and reader's (child) semiotic spaces, which would make the whole picture still more complex" (Nikolajeva 1996, 28). That which Nikolajeva ignores is thus exactly what I need. So I thank her for drawing my attention to it in this way.

To the above three readers, I would like to add yet another, who may or may not play an important role in contributing to the ambivalence of a given work: the illustrator.

1.3.4. The Illustrator as Addressee and Addresser

Referring to Kenneth Marantz's article on "The Picture Book as Art Object," Golden writes that the artist "does more than reflect the text: he/she is an interpreter of the text" (103).[9] The illustrator is thus, first of all, an adult reader, consisting of adult and child selves as described hereinbefore. And through his or her pictorial interpretations of the text, he or she subsequently becomes an "addresser." The illustrator may very well expand on the ambivalence of a text by 1) addressing his or her own adult and child selves, conveying responses that have been evoked by the text; and/or 2) seeking to address both the external child and adult addressees.

Whether addressing his or her dual self or a dual external audience (or a mixture of the two), the illustrator may interpret the text in a very childlike way for the most part, while using certain adult codes, too, such as specific allusions to the literature for adults of the given adult/children's system author. This is the case notably with Étienne Delessert, who illustrated two of Ionesco's *Contes* and whose pictures I will be discussing in more detail in the third chapter. Although certain visual codes may be only fully grasped by the adult reader, here, too,

[9]Marantz's article "The Picture Book as Art Object: A Call for Balanced Reviewing" was published in the *Wilson Library Bulletin* in October 1977 (148-51).

perhaps the illustrator might expect the child to appreciate at least certain glimmers thereof. And adult readers reading to children during a "book reading event" (Golden 161) might, for example, use an image of a rhinoceros that pops up in the middle of a picture book to impart a few words about Ionesco the playwright. In this way, youngsters would learn something both about the world of literature for adults and about how the paratext can function as a "playground" (Higonnet 47).

1.4. Research Methodology

In order to appreciate the interweaving of child and adult codes in the ambivalent works of my adult/children's system authors and to construct images of "competent" child and adult readers, I propose to analyze how the texts could be theoretically "naturalized" by a child vs. an adult or, if one prefers, how the writer has made this dual naturalization possible. To this end, I would like to refer, in particular, to Culler's "five levels of 'vraisemblance', five ways in which a text may be brought into contact with and defined in relation to another text which helps to make it intelligible" (140). Culler explains:

> First there is the socially given text, that which is taken as the 'real world'. Second, but in some cases difficult to distinguish from the first, is a general cultural text: shared knowledge which would be recognized by participants as part of culture and hence subject to correction or modification but which nonetheless serves as a kind of 'nature'. Third, there are the texts or conventions of a

> genre, a specifically literary and artificial vraisemblance. Fourth, comes what might be called the natural attitude to the artificial, where the text explicitly cites and exposes vraisemblance of the third kind so as to reinforce its own authority. And finally, there is the complex vraisemblance of specific intertextualities, where one work takes another as its basis or point of departure and must be assimilated in relation to it (140).

For each work, I will thus consider what could be naturalized by a child (as well as, of course, by an adult) vs. that which could really only be naturalized by an adult (but of which certain notions might be accessible to children, particularly if an adult reader chooses to offer an explanation). Where applicable, I will also discuss the function of illustrations, as well as other paratextual features.

Additionally, my analyses will involve some ideas from Peter Rabinowitz's *Before Reading* (1987), which is about the many narrative conventions that readers (and writers) employ. Although, save for a few examples, Rabinowitz (like Culler) is not concerned with child readers, much of what he says could apply to them, too. My readings will furthermore be enhanced by secondary materials on children's literature, as well as on the specific adult/children's system authors.

I would like to point out that when I propose to read as an "adult," I have in mind specifically the sort of "reader as interpreter" that J.A. Appleyard describes as:

> the reader who studies literature systematically, typically the college English major or graduate student or teacher. [This

> reader approaches literature] as an organized body of knowledge with its own principles of inquiry and rules of evidence, learns to talk analytically about it, acquires a sense of its history and perhaps even a critical theory of how it works (14-15).

The "reader as interpreter" is, therefore, very close to what I, in fact, am.

As far as the child reader is concerned, here I am faced with the same problem that troubles all scholars of children's literature: how to read as a child? The possibility of conducting an empirical study is an option. But in my particular case, this is made somewhat difficult by the fact that ideally I would have to find children (and preferably the same ones) who could read the texts in French and Russian. Thus, although I make the occasional mention of real children's readings, for the most part, I rely on my own sense of how children could *perhaps* read a given work based on: 1) my knowledge of children's literature and other texts with which young readers might be familiar; 2) my experiences with children (including one who was quite recently "moins de trois ans" and one who still is); 3) my reading of work by people like Appleyard concerning how children process texts; 4) the thoughts of others about children, for example, in Chukovskii's *Ot Dvukh do piati* [From Two to Five] and in various books concerning the sociology of childhood; and 5) my own efforts to "dedifferentiate," attempting to read "**not**-as-the-reader-as-interpreter," but as "the reader as player," "the reader as hero or heroine," etc. (Appleyard 14).

It is unfortunately the case that in discussions of ambivalent texts, the

child's perspective is frequently not considered. For example, in her review of *For the Childlike: George MacDonald's Fantasies for Children* (1992), Leona Fisher criticizes the collection for its "almost total exclusion of the child reader" (48). Similarly, Maria Nikolajeva notes that Shavit and also Danuta Zadworna-Fjellestad (see note 2 above) have been criticized for "underestimating child codes in ambivalent texts and, rather than [accepting] the inherent value of these texts, they try to raise the status of certain children's books... to the level of adult fiction" (1996, 58). Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned Ewers's and my own reservations about Shavit as well. It is thus my desire to always keep in mind what in a given work might be enjoyed and understood specifically by the junior audience.

I would like to add that it is not my intention to offer complete interpretations, but rather to consider how the texts might be made sense of; what operations may occur during the child's and the adult's acts of reading; how potential meaning can vary depending on the competence of the reader; and how the writer creates a text that manages to draw in or position a plural readership.

Chapter Two

Aesopian Children's Literature in the Former USSR: Kornei Chukovskii, Mikhail Zoshchenko, and Daniil Kharms[1]

2.1. Extraliterary Circumstances

In one of his journals, Eugène Ionesco writes about the historical disaster that was the Soviet Union, the country which had "liberated" his homeland, Romania, in 1945:

> Bientôt nous allons fêter cinquante ans de révolution russe. Cette révolution voulait être une libération d'une société meilleure. Ce furent cinquante années de catastrophes, de guerres, de crimes, de tyrannie, de malheur, jamais un mouvement qui voulait déaliéner l'humanité ne l'a aliénée davantage (1968, 134).

It was in this sociopolitical context, and specifically under a regime of ideological censorship, that the adult/children's system authors I am concerned with in the present chapter were active. Aside from the fact that these authors were accustomed to addressing an older audience, their particular extraliterary circumstances were undoubtedly a most important factor influencing them to create "children's" works directed at a plural

[1] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication in Sandra Beckett, ed. *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults* (New York: Garland, in press).

audience of both child and adult readers.

Using what came to be known in Russian as "Ezopov iazik" [Aesopian language], a "language of hidden meanings and deceptive means [used] to criticize... national life, politics and society" (Parrott 39), the writers of what can be called "Aesopian children's literature" envisaged, first of all, an insightful adult reader (like the author). This reader was expected to "naturalize" the text in question, making sense of allusions, irony, parody, allegory, etc., specifically against the backdrop of Soviet reality, e.g., the Stalinist terror. In other words, the work would be read in relation to what Culler describes as the "socially given text, that which is taken as the 'real world'," as well as in relation to "a general cultural text: shared knowledge which would be recognized by participants as part of culture" (140).[2] Second, Aesopian children's literature implied a child reader who would naturalize a given work as (innocent) children's literature. And, third, there was another hypothetical adult reader: the censor, who, it was hoped, would read more like a child and not perceive (or even attempt to perceive) any subversive Aesopian subtext. Thus, in such cases, the previously-cited quotation from Rabinowitz about how authors "design their book rhetorically for some more or less specific *hypothetical* audience, which I call the authorial audience" (21), would have to be adjusted to reflect the fact of having not merely a child/adult reader in mind, but rather a child reader *plus* a plural adult reader.

In what follows, I would like to consider the interplay of these

[2]See also Rabinowitz 1987, 21 and 72 concerning the importance of reading against the text of reality and history.

possible readers in works by three adult/children's system authors: Kornei Chukovskii, Mikhail Zoshchenko, and Daniil Kharms, expanding on what has already been written concerning Aesopian Language by looking at some examples and integrating certain pertinent material that others have excluded. However, before I turn to the individual authors, it would be helpful to discuss further the nature of Aesopian language and its use specifically in children's literature.

2.2. Aesopian Language: Screens, Markers, and Ambivalence

Ray Parrott Jr. explains the following about the origin of the term "Ezopov iazik":

> Tradition records that Aesop was by birth a Phrygian slave, later an emancipated serf. Due to his low social origin and status, he was unable to express himself openly and through allegorical indirection depicted people and human relations in the guise of stories from the life of animals (39).

In Russia, it was M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826-89) who labelled his own fashion of using veiled criticism so as to sneak past tsarist censorship as "a slave's manner" or an "Aesopian" manner (Parrott 41). And there were certainly many others doing this as well. Thus, when Aesopian language was used in the Soviet period, it was already a well-established phenomenon.[3]

[3]Maureen Thum considers a related case of writing "Aesopian" children's literature under 19th-century German censorship in her article "Misreading the Cross-

In what is the only extended study of the poetics of Aesopian language in modern Russian literature, Lev Loseff discusses the function of "screens and markers" in the relations among author, censor, and reader, as well as the vital importance of ambivalence in the Aesopian text. Regarding screens and markers, Loseff explains that if a text is examined

> with an eye to its Aesopian content, ... it separates, as it were, into two sets of literary devices, each with an opposite intent: the devices of one group are bent on concealing the Aesopian text, while the devices of the other draw attention to that same Aesopian text. The former are *screens*, the latter *markers* (51).

Loseff continues by saying that "while screens and markers may be realized in different elements of a literary work, it is frequently one element which is the realization of both screen and marker and which indicates... the invariably dual nature of an Aesopian utterance" (52). Thus, this anti-censorship tactic relied heavily on *ambivalence*: that which could be taken by the enlightened (adult) reader as Aesopian could be read by others (i.e., the child reader and the censor) as being non-Aesopian.

Writer: The Case of Wilhelm Hauff's *Dwarf Long Nose*," *Children's Literature* 25 (1997): 1-23. For more on censorship in Europe in the 19th century, see Goldstein (1989); regarding the Soviet censorship, see Dewhirst and Farrell, eds. (1973), Choldin and Friedberg (1989) and Ermolaev (1997). See also Maria Nikolajeva's "The 'Serendipity' of Censorship," *Paradoxa* 2.3-4 (1996b): 379-86 which concerns various effects of censorship on Soviet children's literature.

Not confined to fiction, Aesopian language thus meant, for example, that Bakhtin's *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i Narodnaia kul'tura srednevekov'ia i renessansa* [The Œuvre of François Rabelais and Popular Culture in the Middle Ages and Renaissance][4] could be read as simply a literary/cultural study of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. At the same time, however, the "screen" could become a marker: a title stressing that the work concerns the past was, in fact, frequently an invitation for the Aesopian-minded reader to consider how the text may be encoded to comment on the present. Indeed, written during the worst years of the Stalinist terror, Bakhtin's book, originally a doctoral dissertation, can be interpreted as "a submerged critique of Stalinism" (Booker and Juraga 2). There are, for example, "obvious parallels between Bakhtin's scathing references to the Catholic church in the sixteenth century and Stalinism in the twentieth" (Holquist xv). Bakhtin's inquiries into the double-voiced mode or "dialogism" of Rabelais and Dostoevsky can perhaps be taken as a marker that multiplicity of meaning was to be sought in his own writing as well.

At the same time, in the former Soviet Union, scientific articles, journalistic writing, literary criticism, historical studies, translations,[5]

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[4]The 1984 English translation of Bakhtin's book by Helene Iswolsky bears the title *Rabelais and his World*.

[5]Aside from real translations which were done in an Aesopian manner (see, for example, Loseff 80-82 concerning Pasternak's *Macbeth*), Aesopian "pseudo-translations" were also sometimes created. In *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), Gideon Toury talks about "manipulating a text's perception by the audience" (41) and specifically how, by pretending that a given work is a translation, the author hopes that the censorship will be more accepting of the

and, of course, original works of poetry and prose could all likewise become parables, allegories, etc. about Lenin, Stalin, and life under Communism in general. As Loseff sees it, the function of Aesopian works—whether in tsarist or Soviet times—was always to attack the "power of the State" (221), giving the Aesopian reader (and I would say especially the writer) the chance to experience a catharsis in the form of "a victory over repressive authority" (230). Thus, Bakhtin's carnivalesque "deflationary" devices, discussed at length in his study of Rabelais, were exactly what he and countless others employed in the form of Aesopian language.

The use of children's literature to conceal subversive content represents a particularly intriguing issue in the study of Aesopian language, and there were many practitioners of what Loseff calls the genre of "quasi-children's literature" (86). Undoubtedly, a very important screen aside from the mere fact of making a given work appear to be "just children's literature" was the author's creation of other children's works which were truly in no way Aesopian. In order not to arouse the suspicion of the censor, for all writers, of course, the Aesopian work had to be the exception and not the rule. Deming Brown explains, for example, concerning Evgenii Evtushenko (1933-), a very popular poet for adults: "Extremely prolific, he surrounds his politically provocative poetry with reams of verse that is 'safe'" (114).

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possible subversive content: afterall the text (supposedly) comes from abroad and from another's pen. One pseudo-translation—for Loseff a "feigned translation"—is Vladimir Lifschitz's verse cycle *James Clifford* (Loseff 78-80).

Another factor to keep in mind concerning the screen specifically in children's literature is that, even if a given work was Aesopian, paratextual features—particularly the illustrations—could camouflage this fact beyond what would be achieved by the ambivalence of the text itself. For example, one Aesopian children's poem discussed by Loseff is Kharms's "Million" [A Million], a seemingly patriotic marching song which marks its Aesopian nature by amounting to nothing but an absurd exercise in counting children. In contrast to Delessert's very much "dialogic" illustrations for Ionesco's stories (see Chapter Three), most common for the Aesopian children's work (and perhaps vital for helping it to get past the censorship) were visual interpretations which stressed exclusively the non-Aesopian, "children's" level. Thus, Kharms's "Million" (fig. 1) was accompanied by the "routine illustration of a troop of Young Pioneers toting drums and banners, [and for this reason] the poem does not at first glance distinguish itself from the great bulk of Pioneer songs and verse" (Loseff 207).

Further screening of a work's Aesopian mode could be achieved depending on where that work was located in a book or magazine. "Editors," writes Elena Sokol, "have placed 'Million' at the beginning of the three recent collections of Kharms's work for children [published in 1962, 1967, and 1972], attempting to exploit what little ideological potential the poem might have" (139). In this way, the message (to be taken especially by the censor) was that the work genuinely represented an expression of patriotic fervour on the part of the author, intended, like other "good" children's literature in the Soviet era, to contribute to the

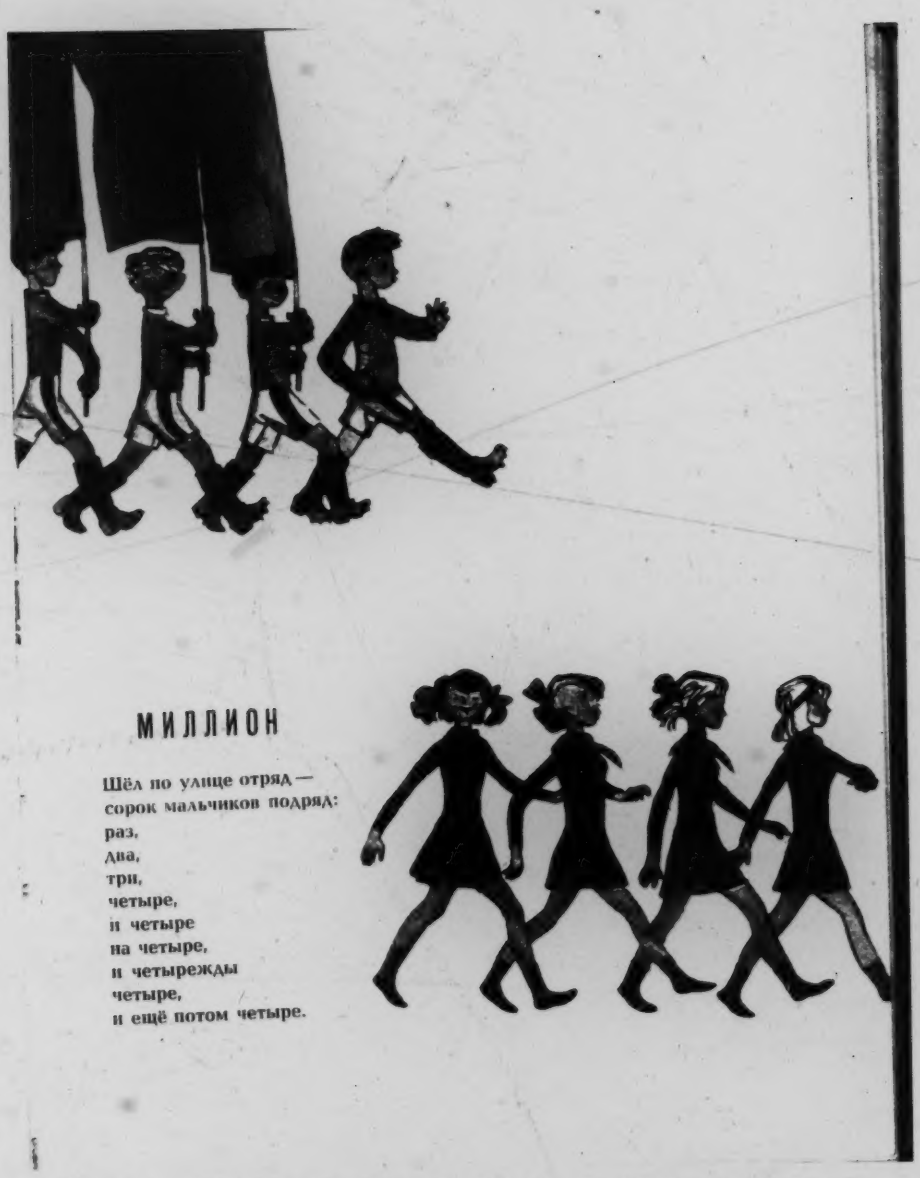

Figure 1. Illustration from *Chto Eto Bylo?* by Daniil Kharms, illustrated by F. Lemkul. No Copyright.

all-important *vospitanie* or character-education of the child (O'Dell 5). Whereas, as Loseff's analysis makes clear, a Soviet adult "reading between the lines" of "Million" would have seen otherwise and not been betrayed by either the ideologically-filled illustations or the text's prominent positioning.

I would like now to look at works by Chukovskii, Zoshchenko, and Kharms in order to consider two issues. First, what makes these texts Aesopian and therefore addressed to a select group of "thinking" adults? And second, what makes the same works appear to be children's literature intended to fool the censor, but also, I would argue, to genuinely appeal to a junior audience? Thus, in my opinion, Loseff's above term 'quasi-children's literature' should read "quasi/genuine children's literature." This view is, of course, related to something that I dealt with in Chapter One: my (and Ewers's) oppostion to Shavit's idea that the child reader of an ambivalent text serves as a mere "excuse" (Shavit 63). Incidentally, a "thinking" parent (or other adult) would have always had the option of using Aesopian children's texts to introduce the child to the fine art of Aesopian writing/reading, thereby showing the youngster that what appeared to be only for her or him actually concealed other, more complex planes. However, this would certainly have had to be done with utmost caution in a society where it was not unheard of (and even encouraged) for children to denounce their own flesh and blood.

2.3. Kornei Chukovskii

Along with Samuil Marshak, Kornei Chukovskii holds a particularly prominent place in the history of twentieth-century Russian children's literature. This poet, journalist, memoirist, critic, scholar, and literary translator[6] wanted not merely to write for children, of which he himself had four. But, like Marshak, Chukovskii also sought to establish a new, playful body of works to replace the dull, often painfully didactic prerevolutionary "Lilliputian literature" (Tynianov 96) that failed to take into consideration the proclivities and preferences of real, live children. Thus, the same sort of development that had taken place in English children's literature in the nineteenth century and even before was initiated only in the twentieth century in Russia.

As in the case of Marshak, the impetus for Chukovskii's desire to transform the realm of children's poetry in particular came from a prolonged stay in England during which he discovered English nursery rhymes, as well as the joys of such writers as Carroll, Lear, and Milne. In addition to this discovery of the English tradition, which "represents an acute understanding of children and an ability to communicate with them on their own terms through fantasy and play" (Sokol xv), Chukovskii also conducted his own extensive research into the language, thought, play, art, and imagination of young children.

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[6]Chukovskii translated numerous English works both for children and adults. For children, he is best known for bringing Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Doolittle* to Russia as *Doctor Aibolit* (Dr. Ouch-It-Hurts). For adults, among other things, he translated Whitman. Regarding the latter, see Gay Wilson Allen's "Kornei Chukofsky, Whitman's Russian Translator" *The Mickle Street Review* 9.2 (1988) 35-41.

The results of this research, published in *Ot Dvukh do Piati* [From Two to Five] from which I quoted in the previous chapter,[7] served to further justify his view that the old variety of Russian children's literature was completely inadequate. Central to Chukovskii's argument is that children themselves both invent and want in their literature nonsense and rhymes of the sort that are found in folk sources (see, for example, Chukovskii 1968, 64-6). Thus, in addition to being influenced in his own writing by the literature and folklore of England, Chukovskii also took Russian folklore as an important source of inspiration and recommended that other children's poets do the same.

Incidentally, folklore has had a particularly important place within Russian children's literature aside from Chukovskii's. For example, the traditional characters of Baba-Iaga, Ivan Durak, and others feature prominently in the Russian children's repertoire, having originated in the tradition of the folk tale. Furthermore, Pushkin's folklore-inspired tales (e.g., *Ruslan i Ludmila*, *Skazka o Tsare Saltane*, etc.) have become the common property of child and adult readers alike. Patricia Arant notes that, in fact, all of Russian literature "from medieval times to the present has made considerable use of the themes and images of the folk tale" (235). According to Arant, a possible reason why folklore has played such an important role in this part of the world is that "[folklore] flourished in Russia for a long time. This was in part due to a predominantly rural population and its inability to read and write prior to

[7] *Ot dvukh do piati* was originally published as *Malen'kie Deti* (1928). The Russian version is found in the first volume of Chukovskii's *Sobranie sochinenii*.

the Soviet era" (228).

Both Elena Sokol (1984) and Andreas Bode (1989) have analyzed in detail the folkloric and quintessentially childlike nature of Chukovskii's *skazki* or "verse tales" (Sokol 6), demonstrating that this is very much *children's* literature. Aside from rhymes, rhythms, and nonsense that were carefully concocted to charm the young reader and to hold his or her attention—and which would simultaneously have made the censor see this as literature for children—Chukovskii further sought to please his child audience by often making anthropomorphized animals the focus of his verse tales. On the one hand, in this way a link was forged with innumerable such animal characters in children's books throughout the world, as well as with the fables and beast tales that have always held a prominent place in children's reading. On the other hand, Chukovskii's animals were notably very innovative for his time, making his tales appear even fresher against the backdrop of existing children's fare:

> Even the wild procession of animals that the poet unleashed—crocodiles, camels, elephants, apes, snakes, giraffes, and hippoptamuses—seemed provocative: up till then only bunny rabbits, squirrels, foxes, bears, and wolves along with household animals such as chickens, cats and mice had been allowed to romp through the pages of Russian children's books. In addition, Chukovsky endowed his animals with original personalities which went beyond the usual black-and-white characterizations (Bode 42; cf. Sokol 89-90).

Chukovskii also created a number of human-like insects, including the lead character in "Tarakanische" [The Cockroach] and the heroine of "Mukha-tsokotukha" [The Chatterbox Fly]. Whereas in "Moidodyr" [Wash'em Clean or literally Wash-Until-You-Have-Holes-in-You] and "Fedorino gore" [Fedora's Misfortune], "animate objects assume the same anthropomorphized role as animals in the other tales" (Sokol 90). In the former, a tale concerning the need to keep clean which distinguishes itself from the sort of literature Chukovskii condemned in that here "the didactic point is conveyed painlessly" (Sokol 130), a "Great Wash-Stand" emerges from the mother's bedroom to scold a boy for being a "неумытый поросёнок!" (Chukovskii 1993, 26) [an unwashed piglet].

In "Moidodyr" notably we see that Chukovskii employs an intertextuality that would be fully accessible to the child reader. Chukovskii makes his young audience specifically part of a *self-referential* intertextual game: the boy flees from the Wash-Stand, Moidodyr, only to see walking toward him the title character from "Krokodil" (1917) [The Crocodile], Chukovskii's first verse tale: "мой хороший,/ Мой любимый Крокодил./ Он с Тотошей и Кокошей" (Chukovskii 1993, 28) [my good, my beloved Crocodile./ He's with Totosha and Kokosha]. In "Krokodil" the Crocodile swallows a dog and a policeman, and in "Moidodyr" the Crocodile at first appears to want to aid the boy by swallowing one of Moidodyr's helpers, i.e., the *mochalka* [piece of bast, i.e., wash cloth] which had been pursuing the child. But then, as if in collusion with Moidodyr, the Crocodile threatens to swallow the boy, too, if he does not head right home to get

washed.[8]

The child reader could likewise perceive another intertextual relationship between the cast of animate objects in "Moidodyr" (in which along with the piece of bast and the wash-stand, a blanket, sheets, a pilllow, a samovar, soap, brushes, and many other items also spring to life) and the equally lively household items in the above-mentioned "Fedorino gore." In the latter work, the contents of a woman's house—a sieve, broom, trough, axes, dishes, a samovar, etc.—all flee from Fedora, eventually agreeing to return when she promises to take better care of them.

Ever thinking about the needs and preferences of real children, Chukovskii felt that another way to appeal directly to the junior reader was by making his works dynamically visual in nature. In the very first of Chukovskii's "commandments for children's poets," he suggested that others follow his lead concerning the fact that

> poems must be graphic, that is, every stanza, and at times every couplet, must suggest an illustration to the artist, since children think in terms of images. Those lines that serve no purpose for the illustrator are also largely useless to the

[8]Intertextuality related to the Crocodile is even more extensive than this. The reptile also makes an appearance in "Telefon" [The Telephone] where he requests that his interlocutor send him, his wife, and Totosha a dozen new and sweet galoshes for their dinner (Chukovskii 1993, 71). Moidodyr incidentally features in "Telefon" as well (1993, 75-6). The Crocodile also appears in "Barmalei" where, in his inimitable fashion, he swallows the evil title character, but agrees to release him when the latter promises to be good and start loving children. The intertextuality continues as another character in "Barmalei" is Doktor Aibolit (see note 6).

> child. The children's author must, so to speak, think in pictures. (If the reader leafs through my children's tales, he will find that Tarakanische calls for twenty-eight illustrations according to the number of images given; Moidodyr calls for twenty-three, etc.).
>
> Poems printed without illustrations lose almost half of their effectiveness (Chukovskii 1968, 145-46).[9]

Thus Chukovskii's commentary, along with his works themselves, provide ample evidence that this was a writer keenly interested in appealing to a child readership. And he succeeded so brilliantly that Maria Nikolajeva would not be alone in calling Chukovskii "the greatest innovator and pathfinder in Soviet children's literature" (1996a, 86). At the same time, however, a number of Chukovskii's so very childlike works also clearly imply an enlightened adult reader.

First of all, there is the issue of allusions to other works of literature for adults. For example, Sokol has taken the time to trace some of the literary echoes found in "Krokodil": Chukovskii, "a voracious reader" (60), borrows "rhythmic-syntactic figures of Nekrasov [and] Lermontov," and there are allusions, among others, to works by Pushkin and Igor Severianin (67; see also Loseff 196). Such echoes could be taken as a marker that the Aesopian-minded adult reader should think of reading between the lines in Chukovskii's children's works in general.

Another thing that in Chukovskii's case could be taken as a marker of

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[9]As Maria Nikolajeva points out, regrettably, Chukovskii's wishes concerning the number of illustrations that would accompany his texts were not followed when the books were republished, beginning in the 1950s (1996a, 88).

possible Aesopian language in his children's texts was his keen scholarly interest in the subject. The final chapter of *Masterstvo Nekrasova* [Nekrasov's Artistry], Chukovskii's well-known book on Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-78), concerns specifically "Ezopova Rech'" [Aesopian discourse].[10] Chukovskii notably begins this chapter by making a comment that itself is Aesopian in nature, i.e., that regarding Nekrasov's use of the Aesopian mode and its forms and functions, "всё это едва ли понятно нынешнему поколению читателей" (1966, 680) [all of this is hardly comprehensible to the present generation of readers]. The irony of this sentence is confirmed by the final paragraph of the chapter where Chukovskii writes that, in actual fact, Nekrasov's artistry is very much cherished by Soviet people for whom it has become "всё роднее и ближе" (1966, 721) [increasingly closer to the heart]. And, in particular, Nekrasov's "литературное наследие принято с... сыновней любовью поэтами советской эпохи" (1966, 721) [Nekrasov's literary legacy is taken with filial love by the poets of the Soviet era].

However, the clearest marker of Chukovskii's own Aesopian language is the subject matter of some of his poems: a subject matter that simultaneously serves as a screen. Take, for example, the above-mentioned verse tale "Tarakanische." It is on the one hand a simple

[10]Aside from his work on Nekrasov, Chukovskii also did a study of the "cryptography" in a novel by Vasilii Sleptsov, as well as a classification of Aesopian devices in *The Russian Revolution in Satire and Humor* which Chukovskii edited with S. Dreiden (Loseff 15). *Masterstvo Nekrasova* constitutes the fourth volume of Chukovskii's *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh.*

children's tale about a happy community of playful animals who are first introduced to the reader as part of a typical Chukovskiian nonsense parade: bears riding a bike, an upside-down cat, mosquitoes on a balloon, lions in a car, a toad on a broom, etc., all of whom laugh while eating *prianiki*.[11] Suddenly, into this peaceful, pastoral (Russian) realm comes an evil and mighty cockroach, the "tarakanische," whom the child might recognize as the typical "glavnyi zlodei" [arch villain] of the fairy tale and also akin to the *idolische* [idol monster] of Russian folklore (Neëlov 57). The animals so fear this beast who threatens—as if he were perhaps the Crocodile—to swallow them and to have their children for dinner that they helplessly accept the cockroach's domination (fig. 2).

However, one day a kangaroo comes by and declares, much like the boy in Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes," that this is not a formidable giant but rather an ordinary cockroach. A sparrow who subsequently arrives out of the blue obviously agrees with the kangaroo: the evil bug promptly disappears through the avian beak. Harmony is thus restored as is so commonly the case in works of children's literature, and the joyous dance to celebrate the disappearance of the evil insect constitutes more Chukovskiian nonsense that would delight the young

[11]In *The Art of Russian Cuisine* (New York: Macmillan, 1983) Anne Volokh explains that "*prianiki* are flat or hemispherical spice or gingerbread cakes with a design pressed into their beautifully glazed surfaces. Various localities in central Russia had their own versions of the recipe, which were then imprinted with special designs. The old boards used for printing the designs can be seen in several regional museums. *Prianiki* were very popular—a necessary stock item in every village general store or city grocery. And a barrel of *prianik* dough was included in every well-to-do bride's trousseau" (530).

Вот и стал Таракан
победителем,
И лесов и полей повелителем.
Покорилися звери усатому.
(Чтоб ему провалиться,
проклятому!)
А он между ними похаживает,
Золочёное брюхо поглаживает:
«Принесите-ка мне, звери,
ваших детушек,
Я сегодня их за ужином
скушаю!»

Бедные, бедные звери!
Воют, рыдают, ревут!
В каждой берлоге
И в каждой пещере
Злого обжору клянут.
Да и какая же мать
Согласится отдать
Своего дорогого ребёнка —
Медвежонка, волчонка,
слонёнка, —
Чтобы несытое чучело
Бедную крошку
замучило!

Плачут они, убиваются,
С малышами навеки
прощаются.

Figure 2. Illustration from *Skazki* by Kornei Chukovskii, illustrated by Iu. Vasnetsov et al. No Copyright.

reader at least as much as the opening "parade" section. Notably, during the dance the *slonikha* or female elephant moves so wildly that the glowing moon starts to shake and then plummets down on to the poor *slon* [male elephant]; the moon then has to be pulled out of the swamp and nailed back into the heavens!

On the other hand, the enlightened adult reading the same work in the 1920s and beyond would perceive an additional semantic level. In the above-mentioned study of Nekrasov, Chukovskii himself stresses the importance of considering a work of literature in relationship to its sociopolitical context: he explains, for example, the meaning of certain passages from Nekrasov as they were created for and would have been interpreted by the liberal reader in the 1860s under conditions of oppressive tsarist censorship. Of chief importance to a sociopolitical reading of "Tarakanische," first published in 1923, is that the cockroach has a mustache, a feature that is highlighted numerous times in the poem: e.g., at the very beginning, the cockroach "рычит, и кричит,/ И усами шевелит" (1993, 6) [growls and shouts and moves his mustache]; the animals "покорился усатому" (1993, 9) [resigned themselves to the mustached-one]; in the end, the sparrow does away with the cockroach, and we read that "усов от него не осталося" (1993, 11) [there was no mustache remaining].

For the adult reading according to Culler's category of "cultural *vraisemblance*" (141), the cockroach and its mustache necessitate specifically an interpretation of the text that takes into account an

important fact: among the coded appellations for Stalin were: "*батька усатый, усатый, усы,* [i.e.,] the old boy with the mustache, the one with the whiskers, whiskers," as well as notably the *cockroach* (Loseff 36).[12] Thus, to a Russian Aesopian reader, Chukovskii's simple children's poem about an anthropomorphized member of the *Blattidae* family became "an allegorical picture of the political situation in a nation brought to heel by the dictatorship of a trifling political faction, at once feared and loathed by the majority of its citizens" (Loseff 199). As Chukovskii writes in the continuation of a line quoted in part above: "Покорилися звери усатому./ (Чтоб ему провалиться проклятому!)" (1993, 9) [The animals resigned themselves to the mustached-one... may he croak]. This was surely a sentiment shared by many of Chukovskii's fellow citizens. But no saviour/sparrow would come to rid them of their iron-fisted, mustachioed leader who was in power from 1922-53.[13]

The Aesopian nature of "Tarakanische" is emphasized further by the fact that in another of Chukovskii's poems, "Mukha-tsokotukha" (1924) [The Chatterbox Fly], the plot is similar to that of the former work: an evil spider suddenly arrives at the fly's house, captures her; and all of her friends (who have just been enjoying tea from the new samovar that was

[12]One wonders if the latter title has anything to do with the fact that Stalin's surname was the Georgian Dzhugashvili, the first syllable of which recalls the Russian word *zhuk* (pronounced /zhug/ because of devoicing) i.e., beetle.

[13]As Maria Nikolajeva points out, the publication date of "Tarakanische," 1923, reveals that Chukovskii was uncannily prophetic in that he was already singling Stalin out as a potential dictator. See Nikolajeva's "The 'Serendipity' of Censorship," 383.

bought at a bazaar) flee, leaving the fly to have her blood sucked out. But at the last moment a little mosquito comes to save the screaming fly: the mosquito chops off the spider's head with his sabre. The subsequent party, which involves dancing reminiscent of what occurs in "Tarakanische"—but without any moon-related complications—is both a celebration of the spider's death, as well as of the mosquito's marriage to the grateful fly.

Felicity Ann O'Dell notes that, like "Tarakanische," "Mukha-tsokotukha" is "generally accepted as having a deeper level of social and political comment. It tells of an ordinary fly who is attacked by a malicious old spider (commonly taken as Stalin). All the fly's comrades hide in dark corners as they are too afraid to help" (57). It is interesting to note in this context that, aside from daring to engage in Aesopian language, Chukovskii himself was generally quite fearless in facing the daunting Soviet power system:

> During and after the Stalinist terror, Chukovskii tried to help many people who were arrested or repressed, writing reams of letters to well-connected acquaintances, but he also kept himself out of trouble. His essential optimism, class background [his mother, Ekaterina Korneichukova, was a peasant] and work habits suited the Soviet model; it did not hurt that Lenin himself had praised his early work on Nekrasov (Forrester 234).

Equally if not more fearless than Chukovskii was Mikhail Zoshchenko whom I will turn to next.

2.4. Mikhail Zoshchenko

Kornei Chukovskii, as well as Maksim Gor'kii, Viktor Shklovskii, Osip Mandel'shtam, and Aleksei Voronskii were among the strongest supporters of Zoshchenko (Scatton 1998, 930), a writer who, although exceedingly popular, continually risked his status in the eyes of the Party by writing satirical works that were often marked by ideological imprecision and Aesopian language. In comparison to Chukovskii, for whom writing for children came early in his career and supplanted his chance to ever become well-known as an author of (original) literature for adults, Zoshchenko turned to writing for a younger readership quite late in his active career.

To a large degree, Zoshchenko's children's production can be seen as an attempt to write specifically the sort of "serious, positive works" (Scatton 1998, 931) that were being demanded in the 1930s, works that would perhaps vindicate him in the eyes of those critics who saw his previous (adult) output as frivolous and even subversive. Zoshchenko's children's œuvre includes *Liolia and Minka* (1938-40), a "thinly-veiled autobiographical... series of first-person childhood reminiscences with clear moral teachings" (Scatton 1998, 931). Another prominent cycle of children's stories by Zoshchenko, and the ones that are of particular interest to me here, are his tales about Lenin.

The latter tales first appeared in 1939 and 1940, mostly in the journal *Zvezda* [The Star], where Zoshchenko himself later served on the editorial board. The stories also were published in book form during this

same period under the title *Rasskazy o Lenine* [Stories about Lenin]: in late 1939/ early 1940 by Detgiz (50 000 copies); in 1941 by <<Biblioteka Ogoniok>> (50 000 copies); and again in 1941 by Uchpedgiz (25 000 copies) (Tomashevskii 357-8). These publication figures are important because the Soviet Union, with its centrally-planned economy and absence of commercial accountability, was well-known for its huge print runs, particularly of children's books (Hürlimann 183; cf. Loseff 198). This meant that if any Aesopian language did get past the censorship, then it had the chance of reaching possibly millions of readers.

Especially with their typically Soviet "heroic" illustrations,[14] Zoshchenko's Lenin stories would certainly have appeared to be didactic literature directed at a junior readership, the same readership that in 1939 was offered at least two other volumes by other authors entitled likewise *Rasskazy o Lenine* (Scatton 1993, 132). Zoshchenko's narratives, like the others, are specifically part of the "genre of Soviet iconographic Leniniana" (Loseff 59) from a place and time in which the cult of Lenin was very prominent.[15] Thus, much like Mikhail Bulgakov who undertook to write a play, entitled *Batum*, in honour of Stalin's sixtieth birthday in 1939, so, too, Zoshchenko made the decision the same year to pay hommage to the great Lenin. But in both cases, it is quite certain that it was a matter of survival and not pro-Communist fervour that was the

[14]Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate an illustration from the *Rasskazy o Lenine* to include in this chapter

[15]O'Dell points out that Lenin's status as a cult figure was well-established by 1938 (156). Regarding the "Lenin myth," see O'Dell 155-8.

impetus.[16]

While Bulgakov's *Batum* is riddled with Aesopian language and therefore only ended up being published in 1977 in the West, Zoshchenko's Lenin tales feature a much subtler technique of addressing the insightful adult reader. Certain passages that ended up censored in later editions are, in fact, not coincidentally, ones in which Aesopian language is present, particularly in the form of irony. The screen of 'Leniniana' in conjunction with "children's literature" was undoubtedly a good one, but the censorship was probably particularly on guard in the case of Zoshchenko, an author who was a master at "not meaning what he says and not saying what he means" (Domar 213). At the same time, however, even in the censored versions of the *Rasskazy o Lenine*, a strong dose of Aesopian irony still remains.[17]

I have already mentioned the fact that under the Soviet regime,

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[16]See McLean x for an excerpt from the autobiographical piece Zoshchenko wrote as a member of the Serapion Brothers, a literary group which existed during the 1920s and which is named "after the hermit Serapion as his is portrayed in a tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann, a writer [whom the Serapion Brothers] admired" (Monas vi). In this autobiographical sketch, Zoshchenko writes that he is not a Communist and never will be. This document was later used against him during a post-World War II Soviet crackdown on the arts. See my conclusion below concerning Zoshchenko's fate.

[17]The censored or "laundered versions" (Scatton 1993, 274) include the Lenin stories published in Mikhail Zoshchenko *Rasskazy i povesti 1923-1956* (Leningrad: 1960), *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh*, I (Leningrad: 1968), *Izbrannoe v dvukh tomakh*, I (Leningrad: 1982), and *Izbrannoe* (Kishiniov: 1990). In *Twelve Stories* by M. Zoshchenko (Columbus, OH, Slavica: 1989), Lesli LaRocco and Slava Paperno have included two (non-laundered) Lenin tales: "Seren'kii kozlik" ("Little Grey Goat") and "Pokushenie na Lenina" ("An Assasination Attempt on Lenin"). *Twelve Stories* is incidentally annotated for English-speaking students: the book is suitable (and also highly enjoyable) for those with an intermediate knowledge of Russian.

children's literature was expected to play a key role in the socialization of the child (O'Dell 5). In the words of Lenin's wife, Nadezda Krupskaia, who took a special interest in this area: "The children's book is one of the most powerful weapons of the socialist character-education of the growing generation" (quoted in O'Dell, 53). And certainly in this country which chased away religion, hagiographic-like accounts of the lives of great men and leaders—especially Lenin—became very important reading material to fill junior minds with awe and aspiration.

Thus, as Linda Hart Scatton maintains, the apparent goal of Zoshchenko's *Stories about Lenin* was to present an elevated image of the man who was first among equals. In these very short stories, written in a simple way accessible to children, the young Soviet reader would have learned that Lenin is:

> truthful ("The Carafe"), fearless ("Little Grey Goat"), brilliant, well-disciplined in mind and body ("How Lenin Studied"), iron-willed and selfless ("How Lenin Quit Smoking"), clever ("How Lenin Outsmarted the Police"), resourceful ("Sometimes It's OK to Eat Inkwells"), generous ("How Lenin Bought a Boy a Toy"), modest and self-effacing ("At the Barber's" and "How Auntie Fedosya Chatted with Lenin"), brave, considerate and solicitous of others ("An Attack on Lenin"), law-abiding and unpretentious ("Lenin and the Sentry"), forgiving ("Lenin and the Stove-mender"), self-critical ("A Mistake"), observant ("The Bees") and sensitive to beauty ("Hunting") (Scatton 1993, 133).

But once again, as in the case of Chukovskii, Zoshchenko also gave certain texts a double-meaning that most likely would not have been within the grasp of the Soviet child reader and which even the censor obviously did not fully perceive. In the words of Keith Booker and Juraga Dubravka, Zoshchenko's narratives about Vladimir Ilyich "can be read as iconographic apotheoses of Lenin intended to instill good socialist values in Soviet children. But it is also quite possible to read the Lenin stories as a sly satirical assault on the Soviet 'cult of personality' that tended to deify leaders like Lenin and Stalin" (86).

The enlightened adult reader probably would have known how in Zoshchenko's works for adults, ambivalence can leave the meaning of a story open. For example, in the well-known tale "Bednost'" (1925) [Poverty][18] Lenin's obsessive drive to give electrical power to the people is shown as both positive and negative: the narrator is pleased to have light that makes him clean up his sordid room in a communal apartment; on the other hand, the poor landlady, Elizaveta Ignatyevna Prokhorova, hates the light and, having no money or the desire to fix up her living space, cuts the wires so that the *klopy* [bedbugs] will not be able to see (and laugh at) her shabby furniture.[19] The squalor lit up by the electric

[18]This story is included in *Nervous People and Other Satires* (1963). Another title for the same story, and the one used by Scatton, is "Elektrifikatsiia" [Electrification] (204).

[19]See Booker's and Dubravka's brief discussion of this story (83-4): they make the interesting point that a possible interpretation of the text comes from relating "the illumination of squalor by the new electric bulbs to the light shed on conditions in the Soviet Union by Zoshchenko's satirical writing" (84). Incidentally, in Zoshchenko's 1934-5 *Golubaia Kniga* [A Skyblue Book], a thematically-categorized compilation of

light undermines the positive propagandistic connotations of discourse on Lenin's electrification drive. While in the relatively liberal '20s it was possible for Zoshchenko to imply in such an obvious way that the positive was, in fact, perhaps negative and that life under the new regime left something to be desired, in 1939-40, and particularly in children's stories purporting to be propagandistic/hagiographic, Zoshchenko could hardly have been so forthright. Yet a related questioning of positive vs. negative in connection with the image of Lenin is nonetheless present.

For example, in "Seren'kii kozlik" [Little Grey Goat] Lenin is indeed portrayed as "fearless" (Scatton 1993, 133). The narrator says as much at the beginning: "Когда Ленин был маленький, он почти ничего не боялся. Он смело входил в тёмную комнату. Не плакал, когда рассказывали страшные сказки. И вообще он почти никогда не плакал" (Zoshchenko 1989, 9) [When Lenin was little, he was hardly scared of anything. He would bravely enter a dark room. He did not cry when he was told scary stories. And in general he hardly ever cried]. In contrast, Lenin's younger brother, Mitia, is said to often "cry his heart out." Particularly painful for Mitia is the well-known song about a little grey goat who decides one day to leave the grandma who

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some of his best tales, the prominently placed last story, entitled "Poslednii rasskaz" [The Last Story], is a curiously rewritten version of "Poverty"/"Electrification." No doubt intended to comment ironically on its hypotext (Genette 11), "Poslednii rasskaz" presents a new, happy ending for the tragi-comic figure of the landlady: after the light comes and reveals the squalor, she gets involved with the others in the communal repairs and "even gets married (whether for her now visible good looks or large room is not made clear). The darkness has been removed, and although there is still room for doubt as well as improvement, the results are definitely more positive than negative" (Scatton 1993, 204).

loves him and go off for walk in the woods. Mitia is said to always bawl each time he gets to the tragic close of the song: "Напали на козлика серые волки, серые волки/ Оставили бабушке рожки да ножки" (Zoshchenko 1989, 9) [Grey wolves attacked the little goat; grandma was left with nothing but horns and hoofs]. Volodia (i.e., Lenin) insists that little Mitia not be scared and not cry. Mitia agrees, and the song is sung once more by him and some other children. This time Mitia sings bravely, although the narrator informs us that Mitia cannot help but shed "только одна слезинка" [just one little tear] at the final line concerning poor grandma who is left without the one whom she adored.

While to the child reader and the censor the story may have yielded a straightforward message about bravery in general and Lenin's bravery in particular, the implications of Mitia's crying, and especially the closing emphasis on his last little tear, stress the fact that he cries not so much out of fear but more out of compassion or sympathy. The enlightened adult reader would thus see this as a story which is fundamentally ambivalent: not crying is good but, if it means a lack of compassion, it is bad. The real Lenin is known to have issued such orders as the public hanging of one hundred *kulaks* [rich peasants] in the province of Penza "so that the peasants would take fright and submit" (Pipes 10), and, as part of his offensive against the Orthodox church, to have declared that "priests resisting seizures of church property were to be shot: the more the better" (Pipes 11). An adult reader who had heard rumours or otherwise

suspected that Lenin had this dark, intensely misanthropic and even bloodthirsty side would have wished that, rather than being little Mitia's "teacher," he might have taken a lesson from his brother about the need to shed at least the odd 'little tear'.

At the same time, the Aesopian Soviet reader might have perceived no small amount of irony concerning Lenin's method of trying to make little Mitia stop crying: "[Он] обернулся к Мите, сделал страшное лицо и нарочно ужасным и громким голосом запел: ‹‹На–па–али на–а коз–ли–ка серые вол–ки››" (Zoshchenko 1989, 10) [He turned to Mitia, made a scary face and purposely sang in a frightful and loud voice: GREY WOLVES ATTACKED THE LIT-TLE GOAT]. Such mean, childish taunting certainly clashes with the expected (and official) image of Lenin as a "Communist Christ-figure" (O'Dell 178).

Thus, "Seren'kii kozlik" can be seen to both inflate and deflate the image of the great Lenin. Additionally, the fact that this story, like Bakhtin's dissertation, was written at the height of the Terror—a time when countless grandmothers and others were having to face the disappearance of their loved ones at the hands of Stalin's "wolves"—makes it quite possible to interpret the song about the little goat who goes off never to return as an Aesopian allegory. This song is, incidentally, similar in this respect to a poem by Daniil Kharms that I will consider below. Furthermore, given these contemporary events, the young Lenin's lack of compassion could be read as a veiled comment concerning Stalin's icy heart, too.

Another example of Zoshchenko's Aesopian deflation of Lenin is found in "Pokushenie na Lenina" [An Attack—or Assassination Attempt—on Lenin]. As Scatton says, this tale does present Lenin as "brave, considerate and solicitous of others" (1993, 133). In order not to shock his wife and sister when he arrives home seriously wounded by several bullets, Lenin insists on going up the stairs alone: "И все окружающие поразились, что Ленин в такой страшный момент думает не о себе, а о других людях. И вот Ленин по крутой лестнице сам поднялся в третий этаж" (Zoshchenko 1989, 13) [And everyone around him was amazed that at such a frightening time Lenin would be thinking not about himself but about other people. And so Lenin ascended the steep staircase to the third floor all by himself]. He is thus, according to this sentence, as amazing as Christ walking on water. However, Lenin's miraculous behaviour is undercut—at least partially—by the line that follows: "Правда, его поддерживали с двух сторон, но всё-таки он шёл сам" (Zoshchenko 1989, 13) [It's true that he was supported on both sides, but nevertheless he walked by himself].

One wonders what would be the necessity of the last limiting statement if this were a truly straightforward hagiographic account. The Soviet adult reader would perhaps have been aware that the same sort of undercutting technique is found elsewhere in Zoshchenko. For example, in "Bania" [The Bathhouse] the naïve "man-in-the-street" narrator, who has just praised American bathhouses to the sky, says: "А у нас бани тоже ничего. Но хуже. Хотя тоже мыться можно" (Zoshchenko 1989, 40) [Whereas our bathhouses are not bad either. But worse.

Although it is also possible to wash yourself]. By following a statement with a qualification of the truth, Zoshchenko suggests to the attentive reader that behind the endless mythologization of Lenin lies a reality that is not quite so perfect or astonishing. This "objectivity" is particularly satiric in light of Zhdanov's words in his speech to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (1934) when he spoke of presenting life "not simply as objective reality... but rather as reality in its revolutionary development. The truthfulness and exactitude of the artistic image must be linked with the task of ideological transformation." (quoted in O'Dell, 178).

Another of Zoshchenko's Lenin stories which clearly involves a similar attempt to poke holes in a cult figure via irony is "O tom, kak Leninu Podarili Rybu" [How Lenin was Given a Fish].[20] The thematic screen of this tale is how Lenin suffers along with everyone else during the hungry Civil War period. However, Zoshchenko implies that Lenin is far from the perfect martyr. The censored versions of the text relate the fact that, even if he could have enjoyed special privileges, Lenin "даже чай пил без сахара" (Zoshchenko 1990, 228; 1982, 335) [he even drank tea without sugar]. However, the original reads:

> "he even drank his tea not with sugar but with rock candy [karamel'ki]." The placement of the word karamel'ki is so chosen that it receives the strong intonational emphasis which is conditioned by the adversative construction 'not with... but with' and also concludes the initial account of

[20]This story was first published in the children's journal *Chizh* 10 (1940) 1-4.

> famine and tribulations which, as is the rule in Soviet hagiographic tradition, the great leader suffers equally with his people. This word karamel'ki, with its mawkish diminutivizing suffix, deprives the entire preceding picture of all sense: from the reader's, and above all the child's point of view, karamel'ki are better than sugar (Loseff 203).

Although the Soviet child reader would have likely missed most of the above irony and allusions, perhaps he or she might have at least been given some pause for thought upon learning that Lenin's "suffering" involved having to consume delicious candy in place of ordinary sugar. Incidentally, according to my Russian immigrant sources and dictionaries, *karamel'ki* are, in fact, not "rock candy," as Loseff's translator renders this word, but hard, caramel-flavored candies. In any case, the point is clear that Lenin's apparent sacrifice is revealed, paradoxically, not to be a sacrifice at all.

Equally Aesopian in "O tom, kak Leninu Podarili Rybu" is the fact that when a fisherman arrives at Lenin's office with a present of a smoked fish, Lenin does not merely say that he could not possibly accept it when children are going hungry in the country. Rather, he becomes outright angry: "И вдруг рыбак видит, что Ленин позвонил. <<Мама дорогая,—думает рыбак,—что же это получилось>> (Zoshchenko 1990, 229) ["And suddenly the fisherman saw Lenin's hand going for the bell. 'Holy smokes,' the fisherman thought, 'now what did I do?'" (quoted in Loseff, 203)]. As Loseff notes, "the fisherman's terror at the sight of

the dictator's hand reaching for the bell cannot, of course, be reconciled with the figure of 'good ol' grandpa Ilyich'" (Loseff 203). Lenin's above-mentioned taunting of his little brother and his irrational anger at the good-intentioned fisherman thus serve a similar Aesopian function.

Loseff mentions one other important point about the fisherman story: that Lenin's decision to send the fish to a children's home is an obvious parody according to which Lenin is presented as outdoing Christ by trying to feed the hungry not with baskets of fish, but with a single fish (204). And, certainly, in a state that officially supported a "scientific atheist world-view" (O'Dell 42), the use of such a Biblical allusion was doubly ironic.

However, what is perhaps most ironic about Zoshchenko's "aesopianization" of Lenin in general is that in his 1912 article "Partiinaia Organizatsiia i Partiinaia Literatura" [The Party Organization and Party Literature], Lenin himself declared Aesopian language to be a thing of the tsarist past and henceforth completely unnecessary:

> Проклятая пора эзоповских речей, литературного холопства, рабьего языка, идейного крепостничества! Пролетариат положил конец этой гнусности, от которой задыхалось всё живое и свежее на Руси (Lenin 41).
>
> [Accursed days of Aesopian talk, literary bondage, slavish language, ideological serfdom! The proletariat has put an end to this corruption which choked everything alive and fresh in Russia] (quoted in Loseff, 7).

Thus, Lenin, a man who claimed to be saving the muzzled Russian people, ended up as a leader featured in works, like Zoshenko's, that invited much reading between the lines.

2.5. Daniil Kharms

The third writer whom I would like to consider is Daniil Kharms, born Daniil Iuvachiov, who had some thirty pseudonyms of which Kharms eventually became the most popular (Aleksandrov 1988, 130). As I mentioned in my introductory chapter, along with other members of his avant-garde literary group Oberiu,[21] Kharms was invited to write for children and went on to contribute abundantly to two magazines that were under editor-in-chief Samuil Marshak. The magzine *Iozh* [The Hedgehog, as well as an acronym for "Ezhemesiachnyi zhurnal," i.e., "The Monthly Magazine"] was for primary school children and was published between 1928-35. *Chizh* [The Siskin, or an acronym for "Chrezvychainyi interesnyi zhurnal" or "Chitaite Interesnyi Zhurnal," i.e., "The Extraordinarily Interesting Magazine" or "Read the Interesting Magazine"], for preschool children, appeared in the years 1930-41 (Sokol 224; Aleksandrov 1990, 9, 231).

Curiously, Kharms, who was childless, apparently had a certain aversion to children (Stone-Nakhimovsky 20; Carrick 436; Gerasimova

[21]Oberiu is an acronym for Ob'edinenie real'nogo iskusstva [The Association for Real Art]. Typical of the playfulness that characterized this group, the inclusion of the final "u" is absurd. The group, which was active from 1926-1930, consisted of: Kharms, A. Vvedenskii, Igor' Bakhterev, N. Zabolotskii, K. Vaginov, B.-D. Levin, and S. Tsimbal.

1989, 79; Glotser 1992, 224). For example, one statement found in the Kharms archives in St. Petersburg reads: "Я не люблю детей, стариков, старух и благоразумных пожилых" (Druskin Fund, #219, sheet 50) [I don't like children, old men, old women, and rational elderly people]. And further on the same page is the macabre remark: "Травить детей—это жестоко. Но что-нибудь ведь надо же с ними делать" [Poisoning children is cruel. Yet you have to do something with them]. But regardless of what may have been the author's own views, he turned out to be a great children's author, which was a good thing given that the modernist aesthetic and themes of his works for adults were completely out of line with the official vision of Soviet literature.

In the late 1920s Kharms did do readings and presented his plays and sketches at Oberiu literary evenings, and it was after one of these, in the spring of 1927, that two of Marshak's colleagues, Nikolai Oleinikov and Evgenii Shvarts, first asked Kharms to write for children.[22] However, eventually Kharms did not risk showing even his friends his very subversive literature for adults in which he typically depicts a (Russian)

[22]See Sokol 125. See also Nikita Zabolotsky's book on his father in which he writes that after doing their readings, Zabolotskii, Kharms, and Vvedenskii were invited to write for children by Oleinikov and Shvarts, and the latter "talked about the new journal *Hedgehog* which was to start appearing the next year... and about the support that Marshak—chief inspiration behind the whole venture—would undoubtedly give the newcomers" (Zabolotsky 70). Aleksandrov and Savin have a divergent version of the story according to which Marshak himself was at the Oberiu literary evening and there realized that the sort of work the Oberiu was doing—their desire to surprise the listener and be so very original and eccentric—would make them very worthy as children's writers (1990, 7).

world full of moral anarchy, total absurdity, and gratuitous violence. As the artist Alisa Poret relates:

> Хармс сам очень любил рисовать, но мне свои рисунки никогда не показывал, а также все, что он писал для взрослых. Он запретил это всем своим друзьям, а с меня взял клятву, что я не буду пытаться достать его рукописи (357).
>
> [Kharms himself really loved to draw, but he never showed me any of his drawings or anything that he had written for adults. He forbade this to all of his friends, and he took an oath from me that I would not try to get hold of his manuscripts].

At the same time, Kharms's literature for adults—like that of other members of the Oberiu—was often characterized by a dada-like, child-minded outlook and general playfulness. It was specifically for this that Marshak took a particular interest in the Oberiu writers—and particularly Kharms—when Marshak was trying, along with Chukovskii, to establish the above-mentioned new variety of literature for Russian children. As Marshak writes:

> У меня явилась мысль, что надо бы привлечь поэтов-заумников. Хармс писал в это время такие вещи, как 'Пейте кашу и сундук.' Но мне казалось, что эти люди могут внести причуду в детскую поэзию, создать считалки, припевы, прибаутки и пр. (Marshak, Tom 7-oi, 586)
>
> [I had the thought that it would be good to attract the trans-

> sense poets. Kharms at this time was writings such things as 'Drink porridge and a trunk.' But it seemed to me that these people could bring whimsy to children's poetry by creating counting games, refrains, funny sayings, etc.][23]

Elsewhere Marshak recalls how very fortuitous it was for him to have recruited the Oberiu poets,

> [которых] изощрявшихся в формальных—скорей даже иронически-пародийных—исканиях. Самое большее, чего я мог ждать от них в начале—это участие в создании тех перевертышей, скороговорок, припевов, которые так нужны в детской поэзии. Но они оказались способными на гораздо большее (Marshak, Tom 8-oi, 509).
>
> [who were adept at formal—or even ironically-parodic experimentation. The most I could have expected from them in the beginning was their involvement in the creation of those topsy-turvies, tongue-twisters and refrains which are so necessary in children's poetry. But they turned out to be capable of so much more].

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[23]As Sokol notes, the Oberiu wrters "would have been disturbed by Marshak's description of them as trans-sense writers [since] they took a vehement stand against trans-sense language in their 1928 manifesto" (125). Although influenced undoubtedly by someone like Khlebnikov, the Oberiuty officially declared themselves to be "первые враги тех, кто холостит слово и превращает его в бессильного и бессмысленного ублюдка. В своем творчестве мы расширяем и углубляем смысл предмета и слова, но никак не разрушаем его" (Kharms 1974, 290). ["the enemies of those who castrate the word and make it into a powerless and senseless mongrel. In our work we broaden the meaning of the object and of the word, but we do not destroy it in any way"] (quoted in Sokol, 126).

Kharms ended up creating numerous children's works—both poetry and prose—which are highly imaginative and filled with much happy nonsense and fun. In short, Kharms, in ways reminiscent of Chukovskii, embraced the child (or childlike) reader wholeheartedly. For example, "as the title itself betrays, in [Kharms's] 'Play' ('Igra,' 1930) verbal play is enhanced by thematic play. It is a playful poem about play" (Sokol 135).[24] This poem has the classic fairy tale architectonic structure: three boys pretend to be a car, a ship, and an airplane. The poem is furthermore full of dynamic action, which is so characteristic of children's literature,[25] and it comes alive as each character tells the others in turn what verhicle he has become and produces the appropriate sound: "Га–ра–рар!" [Ga-ra-rar] "Ду–ду–ду!" [Du-du-du] and "Жу–жу–жу!" (Kharms 1990, 48-51) [Zhu-zhu-zhu]. When a cow suddenly appears and blocks the boys' way, thereby interrupting the game for a time, its animal sound, "Му–му–му!" [Mu-mu-mu], creates a playful contrast with the mechanical sound imitations made by the three children.

Another equally amusing and playful poem by Kharms, "Tsirk Printinpram" [The Printinpram Circus], presents the child reader with a most unique circus. In this circus Kharms notably makes the forces of nature (e.g., mosquitoes, swallows, the moon) perform right alongside more typical circus performers (a parrot, tigers, lions, a strong-man).

[24]This poem has also been published under the title: "Ga—ra—rar!". See volume three of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 1997) 22.

[25]See McDowell 141.

But the child (who likely knows the conventions of the circus) would be amazed by the fact that even the typical circus performers are hardly typical: only Kharms could come up with a parrot whose act involves eating a "soaked radish" and a strong-man who lifts an elephant with his teeth.

Like Chukovskii and Zoshchenko, Kharms was thus clearly concerned with addressing a juvenile readership and did so admirably. As one critic says: "Произведения Даниила Хармса были для детей тем самым праздником, которым, по слову В. Белинского, должна быть каждая книжка, адресованная юным" (Aleksin 73) [The works of Daniil Kharms were for children that very holiday which, in the words of V. Belinskii, was what every little book addressed to the young should be]. Yet, once again, in certain children's works, Kharms also reserves an important place for the hypothetical adult reader.

Loseff briefly looks at what Aesopian material the insightful adult would find in "Million" (see above), as well as in another pseudo-patriotic poem, "Maiskaia Pesnia" [A May Song], a work that concerns "the international day of workers' solidarity" (i.e., May 1), but which, like "Million," hides satirical content behind this apparent propaganda (Loseff 205-6). The particular Aesopian work by Kharms that I would like to focus on is "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek" [A Man Left Home], a small poem that had a huge effect on Kharms's career—and his life—because the censorship happened to see through the screen.

To the Soviet child reader, the work in question would have likely

appeared to be just a quaint narrative about a man who is related to other scatterbrained characters such as Marshak's "chelovek rasseiannyi/ S ulitsy Basseinoi" [the absentminded man from Basseinaia Street].[26] Kharms's man leaves home one day, begins a long voyage by foot without ever stopping, goes into a wood once at dawn and disappears. A typical Soviet-era illustration for this poem shows precisely a man heading towards the trees (fig. 3):

Из дома вышел человек
С дубинкой и мешком
  И в дальний путь,
  И в дальний путь
Отправился пешком.

Он шёл всё прямо и вперёд
И всё вперёд глядел.
  Не спал, не пил,
  Не пил, не спал,
Не спал, не пил, не ел.

И вот однажды на заре
Вошёл он в тёмный лес.
  И с той поры,
  И с той поры,
И с той поры исчез.

Но если как-нибудь его
Случится встретить вам,
  Тогда скорей,

[26]Marshak's *Vot Kakoi Rasseiannyi* was first published in 1930 (Moskva: Gosizdat), illustrated by V. Konashevich. This man does such things as putting on his pants as if they were a shirt and sitting for two days in a detached train car, wondering why each time he opens the door he is still in Leningrad.

Figure 3. Illustration from *Chto Eto Bylo?* by Daniil Kharms, illustrated by F. Lemkul. No Copyright.

Тогда скорей,
Скорей скажите нам (Kharms 1990, 60-1).

[A man left home to wander far/ Without looking back/ And took along/ And took along/ A long stick and a sack.// He kept on walking straight ahead/ And sleeping not a wink./ He ate no bread,/ He ate no bread,/ And nothing did he drink.// One day in early morning light/ He saw a wood so tall./ He went right in,/ He went right in/ and vanished— sack and all// But if somehow, somewhere, someone/ this stranger ever sees,/ then right away,/ then right away/ do come and tell us please].

Perhaps both the Soviet child reader and the enlightened Soviet adult reader might, first of all, have seen in this poem a definite folkloric quality. In his annotation to "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek" in the recently published *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (1997), V. Sazhin writes that the work has to do specifically with the motif of going beyond temporary existence and into eternity. Here the following description by Propp applies:

В некоторых случаях живой (в большинстве случаев шаман, посвященный, в сказке – герой, причем царство смерти переосмысляется в иное, тридесятое царство) может попасть туда [i.e., в царство смерти] при жизни, но тогда он должен симулировать смерть: не спать, не говорить, не видеть, не смеяться (quoted in Sazhin, 290).

[In certain cases a live person (most often an initiated shaman or in a fairy tale the hero, and, in that case, the

> kingdom of death is transformed into some "thriceten kingdom") can get there (i.e., into the kingdom of death) during life, but then he must act out death: not sleeping, not talking, not seeing, not laughing].

At the same time, however, the Aesopian adult reader alone would have realized that against the backdrop of Stalinism in 1937 when "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek" was written, this narrative about a man who inexplicably disappears alludes to more than just a folkloric or fairy tale tradition. As Vladimir Glotser puts it: "Сюжет – о том, как ‹‹из дома вышел человек›› и ‹‹с той поры исчез››, – был уже не сказочным, а самым что ни на есть реальным" (1992, 222). [The plot—about how "a man left home" and "from that time disappeared,"—was no longer the stuff of fairy tales but the essence of reality]. Although the 1937 adult reader could not have known this, we can now see that this plot is, in fact, echoed countless times throughout Kharms's adult œuvre. As Robin Aizelwood notes, "nothingness, emptiness, and disappearance are recurrent motifs in Kharms" (1991, 106), and these motifs, along with Kharms's often used "theme of evil [and] the motif of random death... bear an obvious relation to Stalinism" (Aizelwood 1998, 437). For example, the prose miniature entitled "Golubaia tetrad' N° 10" (Kharms 1988, 353) [Blue Notebook No. 10] is "a defamiliarized account of someone who becomes a non-person" (Aizelwood 104-5). The latter work was notably written just two months before the publication of "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek."[27]

[27]Numerous other works by Kharms can be related directly to the particular socio-

During the "great purge" of the 1930s, which "reached high intensity from 1936 to 1938" (Riasanovsky 503), countless people 'left home', and what exactly became of most of them still remains a mystery. Like Kharms's man in "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek," they simply disappeared, and for millions, the voyage to the "kingdom of death" would be one-way. In this context, then, the final plea at the end of "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek" that the reader try to find the missing man can be seen not only as typical Kharmsian metafictional play[28] which no doubt would have amused the original young audience, but also as a way of thematizing the irreversibility of Soviet attrocities. The implication is that tracking down a lost literary character would be as impossible as retrieving one of Stalin's countless victims.

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political context in which they were written. For example, the 1927 play *Elizaveta Bam* (Kharms 1988, 175-205) concerns a Kafkaesque arrest for a crime that the criminal knows nothing about and closes with Elizaveta being taken off to the "kingdom of the dead" (recall the above quotation from Sazhin 290 regarding the "kingdom of death" in "Iz Doma vyshel Chelovek"). Another work which has to do with a man who disappears like the character in "Iz Doma vyshel Chelovek" is the 1936-7 untitled poem that begins with the words: "Шёл Петров однажды в лес./ Шёл и шёл и вдруг исчез" (Kharms 168) [Once Petrov went into the woods/ He walked and walked and suddenly disappeared]. One wonders if the latter was perhaps composed at the same time as "Iz Doma vyshel Chelovek" given the very similar subject matter. Another closely related fragment which likewise concerns a man who goes into the woods is found in the Kharms archives (see Druskin Fund, #219, sheet 16). Elsewhere I discuss other connections which exist between Kharms's children's literature and his literature for adults. See "The Child and the Child-like in Daniil Charms," *Russian Literature* 34.2 (1993): 241-69.

[28]For more on metafiction in Kharms, see Graham Roberts's *The Last Soviet Avant-Garde: OBERIU—Fact, Fiction, Metafiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) and Roberts's earlier paper: "A Matter of (Dis)course: Metafiction in the Works of Daniil Kharms," *New Directions in Soviet Literature*, ed. Sheelagh Graham (New York: St. Martin's P, 1992) 138-63.

2.6. The Dangers of Aesopian Children's Literature

Unfortunately, the subtext of "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek" was not concealed well enough, and what happened after the poem was published in the third number of *Chizh* in March 1937 is related in detail in Kharms's diary. At the same time that his marriage to his second wife, Marina, was apparently verging on a divorce, Kharms now had a new problem:

> Пришло время ещё более ужасное для меня. В Детиздате придрались к каким то моим стихам и начали меня травить. Меня прекратили печатать. Мне не выплачивают деньги, мотивируя какими то случайными задержками. Я чувствую, что там происходит что то тайное злое. Нам нечего ест. Мы страшно голодаем.
>
> Я знаю, что мне пришёл конец. Сейчас иду в Детиздат, чтобы получить отказ в деньгах (1992, 216).

> [Now an even more horrible time has come for me. At Detizdat they have found fault with one of my poems and have started to persecute me. They have stopped publishing me. They do not pay me, claiming that there are some unexpected delays. I feel that there is something secretly evil going on there. We have nothing to eat. We are starving terribly. I know, that it's the end for me. Now I'll go to Detizdat in order to be refused my money].

By the fall of 1937, Kharms was desperately calling upon God to get him out of his misery: "Боже, теперь у меня одна единственная

просьба к Тебе: уничтож‹ь› меня, разбей меня окончательно, ввергни в ад, не останавливай меня на полпути, но лиши меня надежды и быстро уничтож‹ь› меня во веки веков" (1992, 218) [My God, now I have only one request of you: destroy me, shatter me once and for all, cast me into hell, do not leave me halfway there, but take away my hope and quickly destroy me for all time]. Although Kharms did somehow survive this horrible period—apparently by becoming hopelessly indebted (1992, 217)—it would not be long until he would 'leave home and vanish' for good.

In fact, Kharms had been arrested once before: in late 1931 as part of what came to be known as the "delo detskogo sektora Gosizdata" [State Publishing House, Children's Section Affair].[29] One of the apparent reasons for the mass arrest was that the sort of playful poetry and other works that were coming out of this children's division were deemed, as Mikhail Meilakh explains it, to be "идеологически вредными, враждебными целям воспитания подрастающего поколения" (quoted in Ustinov, 127) [ideologically harmful, inimical to the goals of the character-education of the rising generation]. Or, according to another account, these children's writers, under the subversive direction of Marshak, "were accused of using their nonsense verse to distract the populace from the building of socialism" (Stone-Nakhimovsky 23). But

[29]Nikolai Oleinikov, who had worked closely with Kharms in the field of children's literature and was closely associated with Oberiu, was arrested in 1937. Neil Cornwell writes that Vladimir Glotser, a prominent Kharms specialist, "thinks Kharms was arrested... , presumably briefly, in that year too" (1991, 8). While Oleinikov was shot in 1937, Kharms, miraculously, was given a few more years of life... or rather a few more years of suffering.

for Kharms, Vvedenskii, as well as Igor' Bakhterev, their arrest (and the subsequent imprisonment and four-month exile of the first two to Kursk) was no doubt also largely related to their assocation with Oberiu, a group whose "meaningless poetry," according to one critic writing a review of a 1930 Oberiu performance, was no less than a "протест против диктатуры пролетариата" (quoted in Ustinov, 127) [a protest against the dictatorship of the proletariat].

The fact that Kharms was arrested again in 1941 and "charged with the standard offence of spreading defeatist propaganda" (Aleksandrov 1991, 45) could be attributed to any or all of a number of factors, including: what had happened with "Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek" in 1937 plus the 1931 arrest; Kharms's membership in Oberiu, as well as his other "questionable" literary-philosophical associations; and also Kharms's general eccentricity and unconventional behaviour which, in a society of conformists, had probably not gone unnoticed. Regarding the latter, for example, once "Kharms appeared before the medical commission to determine finess for military service wearing a tie and top hat, a large pectoral cross and carrying a cane, but with no other clothes on" (Nikolskaia 195-6), and Kharms regularly enjoyed "affecting aristocratic mannerisms in a desperate game of insubordination" (Gibian 13).

Thus, Kharms's Aesopian language alone was not likely responsible for his ultimate fate. But given that Kharms simply disappeared one day—and he died in 1942 under circumstances that are "far from clear" (Ustinov 191)[30]—"Iz Doma Vyshel Chelovek" has certainly taken on a

[30]Mikhail Meilakh, a Russian scholar who has tried to answer all the unanswered

powerful and tragically prophetic meaning concerning its author.[31]

While Kharms did not survive Stalin's purges during which "no fewer than 2500 writers were murdered or thrown into prisons and labor camps" (Nikolajeva 1995, 108), Zoshchenko miraculously did. However, he was eventually condemned to a literary death. Along with Anna Akhmatova, Zoshchenko was chosen as a target for "the great crackdown which the bosses decided upon in 1946" (McLean xxiv). Although, as Rebecca Domar argues, what happened was truly a retroactive condemnation of "the nature of his work in general" (207), it is interesting to note that what apparently set off this condemnation was Aesopian language in two of Zoshchenko's children's works.

Zoshchenko himself was inclined to believe that the Lenin story "Часовой и Ленин" [Lenin and the Sentry] was directly to blame. In a 1994 article in *Zvezda* (the journal where Zoshchenko had published many of his works and had served briefly as on the editorial board until he was removed in 1946), Arlen Blium relates regarding Zoshchenko's

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questions about Kharms's fate, believes that Kharms feigned madness: he was acquitted of his "criminal" charges and became subsequently a psychiatric patient: "Death, seemingly in a Leningrad prison hospital, ensued from either the treatment itself, or from starvation" (Cornwell 1991, 9). Kharms died during the first winter of the Leningrad blockade.

[31]See, in particular, Aleksandr Galich's song "Legenda o tabake," reproduced in Cornwell 1991, xii-xiii, which conflates Kharms with his fictional character. Kharms was also surrounded by others who, again like the man in his poem, also disappeared: Oleinikov who, as I have mentioned, was arrested in 1937; N. Zabolotskii who was arrested in 1938; A. Vvedenskii and A. Tufanov, both arrested in 1941. Among those Kharms knew who had been repressed and arrested earlier, i.e., in the late 1920s and early 1930s, were G. Katsman, D. Mikhailov, M. Iudina, and the family of Kharms's first wife, Ester Rusakova. Kharms was rehabilitated in 1956.

perspective on the 1946 attack: "Сам Зощенко склонен был считать, по словам Юрия Нагибина, что истинной причиной явился его рассказ ‹‹Часовой и Ленин››, в котором изображён грубый партийный чиновник– ‹‹человек с усами››: Сталин узнал себя в нём (Blium 81) [According to Iurii Nagibin, Zoshchenko himself was inclined to believe that the real reason was his story "Lenin and the Sentry" in which there is a rude party official: the man with the mustache. Stalin took this character to be himself].

However, the Aesopian tale which had an even greater role to play in Zoshchenko's fate was "Prikliuchenie Obez'iany" [The Adventures of a Monkey]. First published in the children's magazine *Murzilka* in 1945 (No. 12) and then republished in *Zvezda* in 1946 (No. 5-6),[32] this is an odd little story in which a boy ends up tending to the "character education" of a monkey and raises the animal in such a way that, according to the boy, it can teach children, as well as adults, a thing or two. While to a Soviet child this might have appeared to be simply a happy narrative about a boy and his new pet, A. Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, had another opinion: he describes "Prikliucheniia obez'iany" as "a vulgar lampoon on Soviet life

[32]Scatton explains that the story appeared in *Zvezda* without Zoshchenko's knowledge or permission: a good-intentioned editor trying to earn some extra money for Zoshchenko ultimately harmed him irreparably (1993, 43). An interesting fact related by Arkady Belinkov is that Zoshchenko himself believed that "Prikliuchenie Obez'iany" was perhaps permitted to pass the censorship and be published in *Zvezda* specifically so that the text could subsequently become the basis for a public attack on the author, an attack that would warn other authors, editors, publishers, etc. to take heed (Dewhirst and Farrell 17).

and on Soviet people [in which] Zoshchenko's malicious, hooligan-like depiction of our way of life is accompanied by anti-Soviet attacks" (quoted in Domar, 205; text only available to me in English).

Each day Stalin received hundreds of letters from his victims and their families. In Zoshchenko's letter, which Stalin likely never even read, Zoshchenko specifically denied any Aesopian intentions in his works: "Я если иной раз люди стремились увидеть в моём тексте какие-либо якобы затушёванные записовки, то это могло быть только лишь случайным совпадением, в котором никакого моего злого умысла или намерения не было" (quoted in Kreps, 229) [And if sometimes people sought to see in my text certain supposedly concealed thoughts, well this could only have been an accidental coincidence in which there had been no evil intent or purpose on my part].[33] But no letter could help Zoshchenko, whether it was actually read or not.

Along with Akhmatova, Zoshchenko was declared to be an enemy of Soviet literature and was cast out of the Soviet Writers' Union. His works were banned, and he struggled terribly over the next twelve years to somehow make ends meet and feed his family. He was finally readmitted to the Union of Soviet Writers in 1953, and during the de-Stalinization year 1956, "when the thaw reached its highest temperatures" (McLean xxvii), Zoshchenko experienced a certain public vindication when some of

[33]Scatton notes incidentally that "recently published accounts make it clear that the campaign against Zoshchenko and Anna Akhmatova was a cause dear to Stalin's very own heart and that he himself spent several hours at a specially-called meeting in Moscow expressing his dissatisfaction with the Leningrad literary establishment" (1993, 43-4).

his stories again became available. But he "never regained the popularity and professional stature which had graced the first twenty-five years of his career" (Scatton 1993, 45), and, having suffered from poor health and severe depression for a long time, the author died in 1958. The 1946 Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party which had resulted in Zoshchenko's literary exile was finally repealed by the Politburo on October 20, 1988.

In the case of Chukovskii, on the other hand, it is does not appear that his Aesopian language got him into any particular trouble. Rather, the fact that Chukovskii's children's literature was banned and only republished during the post-Stalinist "thaw" seems to be attributable more to his use of nonsense and other features of his works than to Aesopian factors. Attacks by the "leftist pedologists," who were opposed to such things as the "unreal gibberish of fairy tales," "anthropomorphism," and "verbal play," as well as the general push for the politicization and "real life" focus of literature in the Soviet Union, forced Chukovskii himself to "publicly reject his works as old-fashioned and affirm the need to write new ones about the future" (Sokol 9-10). In general, then, although his career and life were hardly ideal, Chukovskii, who died in 1969, had by far the best fate of the three authors under consideration.

Fortunately, the era of Aesopian literature, Aesopian children's literature, and all things Soviet is over, and by 1991 the censorship was buried.[34] Now, it is all just a very intriguing and terribly frightful

[34]See A. Blium's "Kak Bylo Razrusheno <<Ministerstvo Pravdy>>: Sovetskaia Tsenzura Epokhi Glasnosti i Perestroiki (1985-1991)," *Zvezda* 1996 (6): 212-21 [How

chapter in the pages of Russian history.

The Ministry of Truth was Destroyed: The Soviet Censorship in the Era of Glasnost' and Perestroika].

Chapter Three

Jacquelines and Bobby Watsons: Eugène Ionesco's *Contes*

3.1. "Contes" and *Contes*

That Ionesco's stories are intended for both children and adults is indicated, first of all, by their publication history. They appeared initially in *Présent passé, passé présent* (1968), a journal which involves a spatially and temporally jumbled collage of musings concerning war, Romania, France, childhood, family, life, death, etc. Rosette Lamont writes about Ionesco's decision to intersperse the journal entries proper with the four "contes": "The stories belong to the same time spiral that dictates the journal's form. As meditational exercises the stories allow an aging man to recapture the wonder of childhood, his own as well as that of his middle-aged daughter" (1993, 30).[1] The tales were subsequently published as large format picture books between 1969 and 1976 by Harlin Quist and F. Ruy-Vidal, both in French and in seven translated versions (including English).[2] However, it is in the stories' titles that we find the

[1]Lamont should really refer to Marie-France as "grown-up" rather than "middle-aged," since when *Présent passé* appeared she would have been in her early twenties.

[2]The numbering of the stories in the picture book versions is notably different from what is found in *Présent passé*: in the former, the second and the fourth tales have been reversed. I will relate the reason for this switch when I discuss the illustrations (see note 24 below). In this chapter, to avoid confusion, I will refer exclusively to the numbers of the picture books, as well as quote from the latter (aside from some very

most important indication that the works are from the outset "cross-audienced," a term I take from Lorraine Janzen Kooistra.[3]

Children and adults alike know to follow what Peter Rabinowitz calls the "Rule of Notice" concerning privileged positions (1987, 58-65), and titles are undoubtedly in the most privileged position of all. Ionesco's stories, called in *Présent passé* "Premier [et Deuxième, Troisième, Quatrième] conte pour enfants de moins de trois ans," and, similarly, in the picture books *Conte numéro 1* [and 2,3,4] *pour enfants de moins de trois ans*, notably "give explicit information about the sort of readers they presuppose" (Eco 1974, 7). At the same time, however, while announcing that the texts are specifically addressed to a child audience, these titles also demand that an adult reader be present. As Elizabeth Gardaz astutely points out:

> En précisant qu'il destine ses contes à des <<enfants de moins de trois ans>>, [Ionesco] nous déclare sans ambages, quoique sans mots, que ces derniers ne parviendront aux dits enfants que par la médiation d'un adulte. Nous voici donc devant des textes qui, expressément, ne nous sont pas destinés, mais nous sont, à tout le moins, expressément adressés. Ionesco instaure un lien entre les générations qu'il faut bien entendre (138).

The most recent editions of the *contes* are part of the inexpensive and

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minor alterations, the texts of the "Contes"/*Contes* are identical).

[3]Kooistra's paper, which I mentioned in my introduction, is entitled "Goblin Market as a Cross-Audienced Poem: Children's Fairy Tale, Adult Erotic Fantasy." *Children's Literature* 25 (1997): 181-204.

widely-sold Gallimard series "Collection Folio Benjamin" (1983-85). Regrettably, in these editions the titles have been changed to simply *Conte numéro. 1, 2,* etc., which, of course, entirely alters the initial positioning of the adult reader vis-à-vis the text and also eliminates Ionesco's delightful play with the convention of setting age limits for children's books. However, this was perhaps a better choice than what was done when the first version of the third *Conte* was published by Harlin Quist: "less than three" was changed to "more than three." Gardaz explains regarding the latter that "la modification avait été introduite à la demande pressante de l'illustrateur qui aurait, dit-on, trouvé 'absurde' de réduire la portée de ces contes aux enfants de moins de trois ans" (Gardaz 155). Perhaps this illustrator was not the best one to be illustrating the work of an author for whom absurdity is the whole point.

In what follows, I would like to explore in detail how Ionesco makes his tales naturalizable by child readers and how he calls for 'la médiation d'un adulte' or rather the full-fledged reading by an adult who can, in particular, receive the *contes* against the "intertextual grid" (Rabinowitz 1987, 227) of Ionesco's Theatre of the Absurd and other writings. As I have already mentioned, the appeal to a dual audience of children and adults in Ionesco's stories continues on the level of the illustrations in the picture book versions, and this is an issue that I will turn to in the latter part of the chapter.

3.2. Stories for a Child and for Children

During the brief correspondence that I had with Ionesco two years before his death, he told me something about the origin of his children's stories and specifically how the titles came to be.[4] Ionesco explains that "les 'Contes pour Enfants' pour lesquels vous me demandez des explications sont des contes que je racontais à ma fille Marie-France quand elle n'avait pas encore 3 ans et les réponses de la petite fille sont d'elle, en grande partie" (Letter to the author, 15 December 1992). Thus, we have a case in which, like Lewis Carroll's Alice Liddell, Marie-France Ionesco was both the original recipient of the stories and became, at least in part, the child heroine, Josette, who herself is precisely not yet three.

J.A. Appleyard writes that "young children have difficulty keeping themselves out of the stories they tell" (29). Perhaps aware of this preference, Ionesco not only made his children's works highly attractive to his first real addressee by giving the main character many of Marie-France's attributes, but also by having the fictional world and other characters resemble Marie-France's immediate reality. The *contes*, which are set in Paris where the Ionescos lived, are specifically about a father who tells his daughter stories or otherwise entertains her in the absence of her mother and the maid. Ionesco explains regarding the focus on Papa and Josette that when he would tell Marie-France the tales,

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[4]In May of 1992 I was supposed to meet with Ionesco in order to discuss his *contes*. But when I phoned him the day before the planned interview, he said that he was sick and therefore could not see me. Although he did subsequently respond to some of my queries in the letter from which I am quoting in this chapter, there are many more questions that I wanted to ask in person. Ionesco died on March 28, 1994 before I had the chance to get to Paris again.

> c'était très souvent quand sa maman s'occupait d'autres choses. Donc, c'est pour cela qu'elle n'entre pas dans les 'Contes' et la bonne ne pouvait certainement pas faire les choses que j'ai écrites mais elle voulait que l'on quitte les lieux pour pouvoir faire le ménage et, bien entendu, elle ne comprenait pas grand-chose à ces histoires (Letter to the author, 15 December 1992).

Papa in the *contes* notably has a highly-developed taste for the absurd, leading Lamont to affirm that he "is none other than the writer Ionesco" (1993, 33). Although I would not go so far in my certitude about Papa's identity, in his relationship with Josette, Papa is certainly much like the absurdist playwright who helps the audience "face reality in all its senselessness; to accept it freely, without fear, without illusions—and to laugh at it" (Esslin 1961, 316). He initiates Josette into a world of absurd games and tales while the "straight-[wo]men" maid and Maman, who can be seen as doubles, occasionally appear to show that they do not understand (or want to understand) 'grand-chose' about anything absurd. The latter is a privileged territory shared by father and daughter.

Given the above real-life household setting for the stories, the *contes* are thus naturalizable in relation to a very common children's genre: the domestic tale or family story (Marshall 73-5) which often focuses on a child character.[5] There are notably other family stories in which a child asks a father (or mother or other adult) to tell a (hypodiegetic) narrative as does Josette in the first and the third *contes*.[6]

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[5]See Culler 145-8 regarding naturalization according to "models of a genre."

[6]An American example is Lore Segal's *Tell Me a Trudy*, Ill. Rosemary Wells

Another common children's genre which Ionesco uses and which would no doubt be familiar to young readers is the adventure story (Marshall 71-3): in the third tale, the narrative created by Josette's father is a fantastic trip on an airplane—first to the moon, which he and Josette eat (it tastes like melon), and then to the sun where, in an unfortunate anti-climax, the plane melts.[7] This story also uses the very typical circular journey code "home/away/home" which "has dominated children's literature from the beginning" (Nikolajeva 1995, 47; cf. Nodelman 1992, 192-3). The disappearance of the plane necessitates a return home where the real Papa and Josette will have their breakfast before it gets cold.

Aside from the genres of the domestic tale and the adventure story, nonsense literature is another important means by which the child could bring Ionesco's texts "into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible" (Culler 138). From Mother Goose to Lear to Dr. Seuss, nonsense literature

> gives the child 'permission' to deviate from customary linguistic formulas and to be flippant and irreverent about language... . Nonsense literature invites the child to take liberties with language and to play games with it, while removing that sense of guilt that comes with laying profane hands on something sacred... . Nonsense literature instructs the child to be the master of words, rather than their

(New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1977).

[7]Lamont suggests that (for the adult audience) a possible intertext for this story is Cyrano de Bergerac's *Histoire comique des états et empires de la lune et du soleil* (1978, 32).

> servant, and ultimately, their victim (Anderson and Apseloff 103).[8]

Take, for example, the playful language mix-up which is the focus of the second *conte*. When Josette sees Papa at his desk talking on the telephone, he tells her that it is not, in fact, "un téléphone" as rational Jacqueline and Maman call it, but rather "un fromage." To this Josette replies, "Alors on va croire que c'est du fromage" (Ionesco 1970, n.p.), illustrating perfectly what L.S. Vygotsky tells us is true of the preschooler's language: "The characteristics of the thing are so closely connected with its name that to transfer the name means to transfer the characteristics" (254). However, Papa shifts Josette's attention away from her concern that attributes of the object might be inherent in the word by continuing the ludic exercise:

> Non, dit papa, parce que le fromage ne s'appelle pas fromage il s'appelle boîte à musique. La boîte à musique s'appelle tapis. Le tapis s'appelle la lampe. Le plafond s'appelle le parquet. Le parquet s'appelle le plafond. Le mur s'appelle la porte... . La chaise c'est une fenêtre. La fenêtre c'est un porte-plume. L'oreiller c'est du pain.... . (Ionesco 1970, n.p.).

Josette subsequently proves that she has assimilated what Papa has taught her, using the new language to turn the world upside-down and

[8]Ionesco notably speaks in *Présent passé* about his fear of being "la proie des mots, je suis entraîné, emporté, par les flots des mots" (1968, 242) and expresses the urgent need to put language into question. See below for a related discussion.

proves that, taking her father's lead, she has become 'a master of words'. The following passage, in particular, elicited much laughter from my five-year-old son:

> Alors Josette parle comme son papa lui apprend à parler. Elle dit:
>
> —Je regarde par la chaise en mangeant mon oreiller. J'ouvre le mur, je marche avec mes oreilles. J'ai dix yeux pour marcher, j'ai deux doigts pour regarder. Je m'assois avec ma tête sur le plancher. Je mets mon derrière sur le plafond. Quand j'ai mangé la boîte à musique, je mets de la confiture sur la descente de lit et j'ai un bon dessert (Ionesco 1970, n.p.).

Aside from being readable in relation to the tradition of nonsense literature in general, the second *conte* can also be naturalized against the backdrop of certain very similar nonsense texts that the child may have encountered. In English literature, for example, a character who seems to have a lot in common with Josette's father is found in the jocular tale "Master of all Masters" which was recorded in the late 19th century by Joseph Jacobs in his collection *English Fairy Tales*. Here, after teaching a new servant his odd way of referring to certain objects in the house, the eccentric master is woken by her at night. The story ends with the servant telling him (using the master's language) that he must get out of bed and put on his trousers: the cat has gotten a spark on its tail, and the master must get some water so that the house does not burn down.[9]

[9]Interestingly enough, in *Présent passé* Ionesco has a curious, brief narrative

The closing passage of the story sounds much like Josette's speech above:

> The servant woke her master up in a fright and said: 'Master of all masters, get out of your barnacle and put on your squibs and crackers. For white-faced simminy has got a spark of hot cockalorum on its tail, and unless you get some pondalorum, high topper mountain will be all on hot cockalorum'. . . That's all" (Jacobs 17).

Incidentally, Charles Frey and John Griffith (1987) write that "'Master of All Masters' must be one of the strangest stories ever concocted," and it has long since been something of an enigma: "If new readers or listeners can find any systematic relation between the items' real names and the new names given them, they will have outwitted generations of scholars" (168). However, I would be inclined to say that, in light of the connection with Ionesco's second *conte*, it might be wise to stop looking for any 'systematic relation' between the objects and the new signifiers used by the Master. This man who wants to master words themselves has likely created his own very original, very arbitrary signifiers.

Similarly, Lewis Carroll (e.g., in "Jabberwocky") engages in numerous "manipulations of morphemic units within the standard metonymic sequence of the base language" (Stewart 180) which is namely the comic device also featured in Ionesco's second *conte*. In particular,

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about a cat which has a habit of going in the fireplace, and there is talk about the fact that "cette pauvre chatte est à la merci d'une étincelle qui pourrait enflammer sa fourrure" (149).

Humpty Dumpty, who declares in *Through the Looking-Glass* that "when *I* use a word... it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less" (Carroll 269), provides an interesting connection with both Papa and the Master of all Masters in terms of their idiosyncratic language.[10]

The child's reading of Ionesco's second *conte* could also be done against the experience of certain nonsense children's games that have to do with misplaced signifiers. For example, Susan Stewart describes a nineteenth-century card game called "The Most Laughable Thing on Earth; Or, A Trip to Paris" in which players create their own nonsense story by using words on cards to fill in the blanks of a narrative: e.g., "a guinea pig," "a wheelbarrow," or "a jar of pickles" could complete the sentence "Brown, Jones and Robinson were walking together in the streets of New York, when Brown suddenly exclaimed, I will go to Paris and return in the personification of _____" (180). Nancy Willard describes a very similar, more recent game called "Peter Coddle's Trip" and notes

[10]It is, in fact, known that Ionesco's work has been greatly influenced by the author of the *Alice* books: in Ionesco's plays there are notably many specific allusions and similarities to Carroll, including a character in *Le Tableau*, the fat man's ugly sister, whose name is Alice. Regarding some of the other ways in which Carroll has influenced Ionesco, see Lamont 1993, pp. 43, 57, 153-54, 183, and 189. As far as the debt of the Theatre of the Absurd to nonsense literature is concerned, see Chapter Six in Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961) on "The Tradition of the Absurd" where he discusses Carroll, Lear, and other like-minded writers. In his annotations to *Alice* (*The Annotated Alice*. New York: Penguin, 1960) Martin Gardner explains that Humpty Dumpty's nominalistic attitude is part of a long history of man's attempt to understand the nature of semantics (268-270), a fact which, of course, would not be understood by the child reader, but which could be part of an adult's naturalization of the trio of Humpty Dumpty/the Master of all Masters/Josette's father. See below for more on the adult's naturalization of Ionesco's *contes* in terms of linguistic signs.

that she is also aware of another game like this (224).[11]

At the same time, a child's real-life sense of nonsense can also provide a very important way of naturalizing Ionesco's texts and also explain the appeal that the latter might have for youngsters in the first place.[12] Kornei Chukovskii (1928; Trans. 1963; Rev. ed. 1968) believes that the child's innate sense of the absurd is at its peak "from two to five," as the title of his well-known study states. This means that Ionesco's under three-year-old fictional protagonist, his coeval daughter/original real addressee, and the official possible or "Model Reader" (Eco 1974, 7) of the *contes* are right within this important age range.

Chukovskii relates an anecdote about something that no doubt many other parents and adults have also witnessed and which is connected specifically with the subject matter of the second *conte*. Chukovskii's almost two-year-old daughter delighted in the nonsense that she herself created by mixing around linguistic signs. Chukovskii writes that she had mastered which sounds were made by which animals, and

> these facts brought simultaneously clarity, order, and proportion to a world of living creatures as fascinating to her as to every other tot.

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[11]Another type of play with words that can be connected to Josette's and her Papa's language mix-up is the "spoonerism" or *contrepèterie* as the device is known in French. Spooner himself, for example, created a comic effect by exchanging two initial sibilants as follows: "May I show you to another seat?" became "May I sew you to another sheet?" (Jakobson and Waugh 7). And Spooner's "dear old Queen" became "Queer old dean" (Crystal 262).

[12]This has to do with Culler's idea of reading against the "the socially given text, that which is taken as the 'real world'" (140).

> But, somehow, one day in the twenty-third month of her existence, my daughter came to me, looking mischievous and embarrassed at the same time—as if she were up to some intrigue. I had never before seen such a complex expression on her little face.
>
> She cried to me even when she was still at some distance from where I sat:
>
> "Daddy, 'oggie—meow!'—that is, she reported to me the sensational and, to her, obviously incorrect news that a doggie, instead of barking, meows. And she burst out into somewhat encouraging, somewhat artificial laughter, inviting me, too, to laugh at this invention.
>
> But I was inclined to realism.
>
> "No," said I, "The doggie bow-wows."
>
> "'Oggie—meow!" she repeated, laughing, and at the same time watched my facial expression which, she hoped, would show her how she should regard this erratic innovation which seemed to scare her a little.
>
> I decided to join in her game and said:
>
> "And the rooster meows!"
>
> Thus I sanctioned her intellectual effrontery. Never did even the most ingenious epigram of Piron evoke such appreciative laughter in knowledgeable adults as did this modest joke of mine, based on the interchange of two elementary notions. This was the first joke that my daughter became aware of—in the twenty-third month of her life (Chukovskii 1968, 97-8).[13]

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[13] A closely related example of a child's joy at seeing language mixed-up is that told to me by U.C. Knoepflmacher: "My little boy loves it when I mis-"name" familiar objects, calling his trousers an 'undershirt,' for example" (Letter to the author, 10 October 1995). Chukovskii incidentally appears to have used his daughter's interest in topsy-turvy animal sounds as the basis for a poem, "Putanitsa" (The Mix-Up) in which kittens, who are tired of meowing, decide to say "oink," ducklings turn to croaking like frogs, etc. See Chukovskii 1993, 14-23.

What happens in this account, which for Chukovskii explains "the attraction that a topsy-turvy world holds for young children" (1968, 97), is closely related to the linguistic juggling in which, similarly, a father and daughter engage in Ionesco's second *conte*. Children who themselves have ever undertaken to switch around words would thus undoubtedly find soul mates in Josette and Papa.

I am struck by another interesting coincidence between a real child's own nonsense game as related by Chukovskii and what takes place in another of Ionesco's tales. Chukovskii writes that

> children with a very pronounced sense of fantasy at times push make-believe to the point of eccentricity. Two-year-old Levik, sitting astride the back of his father's neck, loved to conduct a search for himself in the most unlikely places:
>
> "Under the lamp? No! In the thimble? No! In the jug?" and so on.
>
> "Then where is Levik?"
>
> "He's lost! Maybe he is inside a cigarette!" (1968, 121).

In Ionesco's fourth *conte* the focus is specifically on Josette's search for Papa who, like little Levik, is clearly located in one fixed place. While Papa is busy in the bathroom shaving, brushing his teeth, etc. and does not want Josette to bother him (or to see him naked), he invents an absurd game of hide-and-seek for her. He tells her that he is not really in the bathroom and that she should go look for him throughout the house: "Josette dit (derrière la porte): «Alors où tu es?» Papa répond: «Je ne sais pas, va voir. Je suis peut-être dans la salle à manger. Va me chercher.»"

(Ionesco 1976b, n.p.). Josette searches in the armchair, behind the books, in the television, in the kitchen, in the buffet, under the table, and in the closet. She even checks to see if her father is in the oven with the chicken! In the end, Papa finally comes out of the bathroom: in the words of one critic, he "emerges like a surprise from a magician's hat ready to embrace his worthy little offspring, for whom the imaginary is not a separate reality" (Gaensbauer 33). No doubt, any child who has ever played the "correct" version of hide-and-seek would naturalize Papa's wacky version against that experience. Or children who, like the above Levik, play crazy hide-and-seek games of their own would also find much of interest in Ionesco's fourth tale.

Also very important for the child's potential naturalization of Ionesco is that all of the *contes* recall the fact that "children's literature tends to be repetitious" (Nodelman 1992, 85). As Gardaz argues, "on peut dire sans exagérer que l'assise du jeu dans les *contes* est la répétition" (139). Among the many examples of repetition in the stories are: the multiplication of characters all named Jacqueline in a tale Papa tells Josette and, subsequently, in Josette's retelling of this tale (*Conte numéro 1*); Papa's above long list of interchanged words (*Conte numéro 2*); the repetition of ridiculous warnings by Josette's mother, the maid, and the concierge about the danger of leaning out the window of the airplane (*Conte numéro 3*); and Josette's above-mentioned repeated attempts to locate Papa (*Conte numéro 4*).

That repetition is a predominant feature of children's literature

perhaps stems from the fact that it is a very prominent part of real child language and specifically children's nonsense language. Eleanor Ochs writes that "repetition is a highly versatile device, and it is among the earliest behaviors emergent in the speech of the language-acquiring child" (70).[14] For example, the other day my son said to me between giggles that for breakfast "we had toast and jam and cornflakes, toast and jam and cornflakes, and then more cornflakes." (I was later told that he had actually had just one bite of toast and jam, so the rest was definitely a playful fabrication!). This immediately made me recall Ionesco's first *conte* in which the narrator says that the parents are exhausted in the morning when Josette comes to their bedroom door because "la veille, ils étaient allés au théâtre, au restaurant, puis après le restaurant, au guignol," and then two pages later, we learn that "les parents étaient écœurés, parce que j'ai oublié de dire, qu'après le guignol, ils avaient encore été au restaurant" (Ionesco 1969, n.p.). In the third *conte* a very similar zany repetition of events notably occurs, only this time it is Papa alone who has been "au restaurant, et puis après au cinéma, et puis après au restaurant, puis après au guignol, et puis après encore au restaurant (Ionesco 1976a, n.p.).

Incidentally, the latter similarity between what Papa does in the third *conte* and what Papa and Maman do in the first is one of the many

[14]See M. Saville-Troike's "Private Speech: Evidence for Second Language Learning Strategies During the 'Silent' Period," *Journal of Child Language* 15.3 (1989): 567-90 and L. Kohlberg et al. "Private Speech: Four Studies and a Review of Theories," *Child Development* 39.3 (1968): 691-736 concerning repetition specifically in children's egocentric speech.

possible intertextual relationships (Culler 139) that Ionesco sets up within the *contes* which would be accessible to the child reader who is offered the books as a series. Thus, both intra-Ionescan intertextuality, as well as external intertextuality (e.g., similarities to other nonsense literature as described above), could be part of the child's reading of the *contes*.

It is thus clear that for child readers—both those who are truly not quite three and those who are older—there are many potential ways that Ionesco's *contes* could be naturalized as "children's literature." The stories can be read in relation to certain predominant children's genres and conventions, in their connection to real-life children's language and games, or in light of certain intertextual relationships. And for the original addressee, Marie-France, the *contes* would have been naturalized as "children's literature," first and foremost, because she knew that they had been expressly created for her and had to do with her own childhood reality.

At the same time, however, it is also clear that the *contes* were devised in such a way as to be naturalizable by adults (including the author himself) on a multitude of levels that are most likely beyond the competence of children.

3.3. (Children's) Literature for Adults

On the one hand, an adult reading Ionesco's *contes* could naturalize them in any or all of the above ways that a child might. When reading about Papa's crazy game of hide-and-seek in the fourth *conte*, I, for example, cannot help but see it in connection to a similar game that my

father invented when I was perhaps not much older than little Marie-France. In order to distract my sisters and me for a moment when he was busy, he would say: "Go to the living room [kitchen, etc.] to see if you're there!" And we would run around the house giggling, checking to see if we were really 'there', wherever that happened to be. However, I find that the attempt to read the *contes* as an erstwhile child (and as children's literature) is continually jolted by points in the text at which I feel that I am being asked to read as an adult, and, particularly one who is versed in Ionesco's adult œuvre. As Rabinowitz writes: "the appropriate background group for a given text usually includes the previous works by the same author" (1987, 71; see above). As I wrote earlier, with the exception of being able to see any one *conte* in its relationship to the others, the child reader would obviously not have access to the 'appropriate background group' for Ionesco or for any other adult/children's system author. And a child, of course, would not naturalize the *contes* in the context of *Présent passé*.

Specifically when the *contes* are read as part of the latter work, the adult audience would perhaps see their function as providing a cheery contrast to the often anguished recollections and musings. Deborah Gaensbauer writes in this connection that "these stories recapture, if only fleetingly, [a] capacity for wonder" (32), echoing Lamont's view quoted at the beginning of the present chapter. For example, the third story is placed just after a 1941 journal entry concerning Ionesco's terrible frustration at not being able to get visas to leave Romania so as to return

to his beloved France. At the same time, however, the *contes* can also be seen to repeat and thereby emphasize (Rabinowitz 1987, 54) certain ideas and images from the journal entries of *Présent passé* while simultaneously calling upon the adult reader to see a host of intertextual links to Ionesco's plays, other journals, etc. I would like to consider four of the most important intersections which are evoked specifically by entries in *Présent passé*: the idealization of childhood; the absurdity of language; petit bourgeois conformity/anti-absurdism; and estranged spouses. Subsequently, I will briefly discuss two additional connections which the adult reader could see between the children's stories and Ionesco's dramatic works.

3.3.1. The Child as Father

The above-mentioned 'capacity for wonder' that is so central to the *contes* can be read in light of countless passages from Ionesco which have to do with the idealization of childhood, an idealization which for Lamont recalls the Romantic (Wordsworthian) idea that "the child is father of the man" (Lamont 1978, 31; cf. Lamont 1993, 21). In *Présent passé* we read, for example, the following:

> L'enfance, c'est le monde du miracle ou du merveilleux: c'est comme si la création surgissait, lumineuse, de la nuit, toute neuve et toute fraîche, et toute étonnante. Il n'y a plus d'enfance à partir du moment où les choses ne sont plus étonnantes. Lorsque le monde vous semble <<déjà vu>>; lorsqu'on s'est habitué à l'existence, on devient adulte. Le monde de la féerie, la merveille neuve se fait banalité,

> cliché. C'est bien cela le paradis, le monde du premier jour. Être chassé de l'enfance, c'est être chassé du paradis, c'est être adulte (1968, 250).

In Ionesco's children's stories, which allude to 'le monde de la féerie' by being namely "contes,"[15] Josette is notably not merely "under three," but rather, as we are told by the narrator in the very first line of the first *conte*, "elle a trente-trois mois" (Ionesco 1969, n.p.). While the importance of this fact would likely go unnoticed by a child reader, an adult would probably know to follow Rabinowitz's "Rules of Signification" (1987, 76) or Culler's "symbolic recuperation" (225) and thereby recognize that, when expressed in terms of months, two and three-quarters "suggests the perfect age of the human being, that of the crucified Christ" (Lamont 1993, 30). Thus, the perfection of Christ is projected on to Josette who is at that perfect age when "les choses sont toujours étonnantes" (see Ionesco above). Furthermore, "the love fusion [between Papa and Josette] allows the grown man to return to a blessed state of fresh awareness" (Lamont 1978, 35).[16] In this way, these fictional characters can be seen to illustrate the capacity so valued by the non-fiction writer of *Présent passé* .

For Ionesco, the joy of childhood and the sense of "présence" and

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[15]On the overall importance of the fairy tale in Ionesco's literature, see Martin Esslin's "Ionesco and the Fairytale Tradition," *The Dream and the Play: Ionesco's Theatrical Quest*, ed. Moshe Lazar (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1982) 21-31.

[16]The adult reader might see a connection between Josette/Papa and a little girl and her father who appear in *Le Piéton de l'air*. In this play, Marthe symbolizes the state-of-grace that her father Bérenger dreams of achieving.

"plénitude" (1968, 250) were intimately tied to the paradise of La Chapelle-Anthenaise, a village near Laval, where from 1917-19 he lived on a farm called "Le Moulin" with a couple and their daughter, Marie. He writes that while he was there, "je me trouvais hors du temps, donc dans une espèce de paradis" (1967, 13).[17] For the adult reader, Ionesco's autobiography and fiction merge when in the "Troisième Conte" Papa's and Josette's airplane adventure takes them right over La Chapelle-Anthenaise:

> PAPA—Et puis l'avion monte, monte...
> JOSETTE—il monte, monte, monte...
> PAPA—Et on voit la campagne.
> JOSETTE—Moulin...
> PAPA—Oui, on voit aussi le moulin de la Chapelle Anthenaise, et puis on voit Marie dans la basse-cour de la ferme...
> JOSETTE—Les canards...
> PAPA—La rivière... (Ionesco 1976a, n.p.).

At the heart of Ionesco's whole creative enterprise was, in fact, the motto "retrouver l'enfance" (Esslin 1982, 30).[18] The adult reader can see that the above scene literally fulfils this desire.

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[17]In *Présent passé* an entry concerning La Chapelle-Anthenaise is found on pp. 59-60.

[18]See Ionesco's *Découvertes* (Genève: Skira, 1969) in which he explores the childlike basis of his creativity (especially via his own childlike illustrations) and which ends with this motto "retrouver l'enfance."

3.3.2. The Absurdity of Language

As I have shown above, one of ways that Josette and her Papa make the world "toute neuve et toute fraîche, et toute étonnante" (1968, 250) is through their play with language, particularly in the second *conte*. For the adult reader, what takes place in this story can notably be illuminated by some pondering concerning language which is found in the final section of *Présent passé*. Ionesco describes how he would sometimes be overcome by "une sorte de grâce, une euphorie" when "toute notion, toute réalité se vidait de son contenu... comme si les choses s'étaient libérées de toute dénomination arbitraire, d'un cadre qui ne leur convenaient pas, qui les limitaient" (1968, 218). Ionesco continues:

> Souvent, cela commençait, d'une façon inattendue, lorsque je prononçais un mot quelconque: papier, par exemple. C'est comme si le mot disparaissait, qui s'était substitué à une réalité qu'il avait rendue prisonnière et qu'il avait cachée. Ou lorsque je disais, Aristoteles, A-ris-to-te-les. Le mot cahier ne voulait plus rien dire et n'était qu'une écorce et les syllabes A-ris-to-te-les redevenaient des sons dénués de signification, comme une boîte ouverte et vidée... Une fois que je prenais fondamentalement conscience que les significations, que les mots sont arbitraires, plaqués, l'homme au-delà des catégories et innommé se dévoilait dans sa réalité et le papier n'avait plus rien à faire avec l'école, avec la littérature, avec la librairie où je l'avais acheté: tout devenait réalité en soi, ineffable, indépendant de tout système relationnel (219).

A related text that the adult reader might bring to mind in this context is one by Saussure. He writes in the "Nature of the Linguistic Sign" that

> the link between signal and signification is arbitrary. Since we are treating a sign as the combination in which a signal is associated with a signification, we can express this more simply as: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*. There is no internal connexion, for example, between the idea 'sister' and the French sequence of sounds *s-ö-r* which acts as its signal. The same idea might as well be represented by any other sequence of sounds. This is demonstrated by differences between languages, and even by the existence of different languages. The signification 'ox' has as its signal *b-ö-f* on one side of the frontier, but *o-k-s* (*Ochs*) on the other side (12).

Saussure writes further that *arbitrary* "must not be taken to imply that a signal depends on the free choice of the speaker" and that "the individual has no power to alter a sign in any respect once it has become established in a linguistic community" (12-13). However, Papa, like the Master of all Masters and Humpty Dumpty, obviously has his own ideas about the 'nature of linguistic signs.'

Continuing with his or her reading, the adult might relate Ionesco's above musings about language and how in the second *conte* Papa engages in "une remise en question d'un langage" (Ionesco 1968, 244) to the fact that front and center in the whole Theatre of the Absurd is precisely the "dethronement of language" (Esslin 1961, 315) and the desire to reveal that "language as an object... is absurd, is the supreme absurdity" (Coe 1961, 63). Ionesco wants to show, and does so repeatedly, that language does not offer an orderly, logical protection from senselessness but rather is intimately wound up in the inanity. At the same time, however,

Ionesco's (and Papa's/Josette's) "poetic sabotage of language" (Lamont 1978, 41) also represents its rejuvenation: "Robbed of their so-called 'real' meaning, dynamited, sapped, metamorphosed, words can regain once more their original freshness, their state of grace. The poet and the child alone can operate this transformation" (Lamont 1978, 41).

La Cantatrice chauve, called by Ionesco a "tragédie du langage" (1962, 159), is a good place to look for intertextual connections to the second *conte*. Here, we find many perverted sentences which sound very similar to Josette's topsy-turvy phrases, i.e., "Je regarde par la chaise en mangeant mon oreiller," etc. For example, the maid's apocalyptic-sounding poem "Le Feu" in scene ix consists of correct grammar/syntax and progressively distorted semantics. In this poem, which announces itself as nonsense by beginning with the invented word "polycandres," things which cannot catch on fire, e.g., a rock, water, smoke, are said to do so: "Les polycandres brillaient dans les bois/ Une pierre prit feu/... L'eau prit feu/ Le ciel prit feu/ La cendre prit feu/ La fumée prit feu/ Le feu prit feu" (Ionesco 1991, 37). This poem is a prelude to the utter breakdown of communication between the Smiths and the Martins which involves "the violation of the semantic connectedness" both within sentences and between separate statements (Revzina and Revzin 254): e.g., "Je te donnerai les pantoufles de ma belle-mère si tu me donnes le cercueil de ton mari"; "A bas le cirage!"; "Les souris ont des sourcils, les sourcils n'ont pas de souris" (Ionesco 1991, 39-41). As Ionesco explains about this wild finale: "Les vérités élémentaires et sages qu'ils échangeaient,

enchaînées les unes aux autres, étaient devenues folles, le langage s'était désarticulé, les personnages s'étaient décomposés; la parole, absurde, s'était vidée de son contenu" (1962, 158).[19] Like the audience of *La Cantatrice chauve*, Josette is thus made to appreciate how void language is while at the same time she is entertained by what is a very delightful and liberating linguistic madness.

The adult reader might also see that there are connections between the second *conte* and other Ionesco plays as well. For example, in *Jacques ou la Soumission*, Jacques and Roberte II decide to alter their language. But rather than interchange linguistic signs as Josette's father does, they reduce everything to a single word, creating "a purely homonymic language [which] is a *reductio ad absurdum*" (Jakobson and Waugh 9):

> ROBERTE II: Dans la cave de mon château, tout est chat...
> JACQUES: Tout est chat.
> ROBERTE II: Pour y désigner les choses, un seul mot: «chat». Les chats s'appellent «chat», les aliments: «chat», les insectes: «chat», les chaises: «chat», toi: «chat», moi: «chat», le toit: «chat», le nombre un: «chat», le nombre deux: «chat», trois: «chat», vingt: «chat», trente: «chat», tous les adverbes: «chat», toutes les prépositions: «chat». Il

[19]Earlier in *La Cantatrice chauve* there are also plenty of other examples of real words ending up in the wrong sentences, thereby creating the same sort of linguistic chaos that is found in the second *conte*. For example, in the opening scene Mme Smith makes the following comment to M. Smith in which the last element simply does not belong: "Le yaourt est excellent pour l'estomac, les reins, l'appendicite et l'apothéose" (Ionesco 1991, 11). In *Les Chaises* the communication between the old man and his wife, who are "des êtres noyés dans l'absence de sens" (Ionesco 1962, 165), also in places involves the use of a similar technique. For example, the old man recalls that when he was young "dans la pluie... on claquait des oreilles, des pieds, des genoux, des nez, des dents" (Ionesco 1991, 144).

y devient facile de parler (Ionesco 1991, 112).

Jacques and Roberte II proceed to demonstrate the new language much as Josette does in the second *conte*.

In *La Leçon* the destruction of language which results in nonsense is similarly at the forefront. Josette's father can perhaps even be seen as a benign version of the tyrannical professor who dominates his young female pupil by insisting that he has the power to decide the correct meaning of words. And the professor can likewise be linked to Humpty Dumpty and the Master of all Masters (see above). One scene in *La Leçon*, in particular, is very similar to a dialogue that occurs in Ionesco's second *conte*. In the latter work, Papa decides for some reason that while most words will be mixed around, one will not be semantically perverted. Josette asks: "Comment s'appellent les images?" Papa replies: "Les images?... Comment s'appellent les images?... On ne doit pas dire 'images' il faut dire 'images'" (Ionesco 1970, n.p.). In this way a new level of absurdity is introduced. The first level consists of the above "Saussurian" destruction of the relationship between signifier and signified. This level establishes the rules of the game, the key to understanding Papa's "logic" and, paradoxically, the norm. When "images" are suddenly called "images," this seemingly conventional usage clashes with the absurd language of the first level: the result is a vortex of nonsense.

Compare the logic of "images" as "images" to the following exchange

from *La Leçon*. Shortly before killing what he sees as another unwilling pupil, his fortieth victim of the day with whom he cannot achieve "normal communication" (Revzina and Revzin 260), the professor tries to explain to her how a certain phrase would be translated into different languages:

> LE PROFESSEUR: En espagnol: les roses de ma grand-mère sont aussi jaunes que mon grand-père qui était Asiatique; en latin: les roses de ma grand-mère sont aussi jaunes que mon grand-père qui était Asiatique. Saisissez-vous les différences? Traduisez cela en... roumain
> L'ÉLÈVE: Les... comment dit-on roses, en roumain?
> LE PROFESSEUR: Mais «roses», voyons.
> L'ÉLÈVE: Ce n'est pas «roses»? Ah, que j'ai mal aux dents...
> LE PROFESSEUR: Mais non, mais non, puisque «roses» est la traduction en oriental du mot français «roses», en espagnol «roses», vous saisissez? En sardanapali «roses»... (Ionescò 1991, 65-66).

Here, however, the logic of the absurd is slightly different from the "images" example above. Without a background of mismatched signifieds and signifiers the professor's "translation" system appears absurd simply against the background of common sense.

3.3.3. Anti-Absurdist and Conformist Adults

Another important connection that the adult reader might see between Ionesco's *contes* and *Présent passé* is that, while Josette and Papa delve into the heart of the absurd, Jacqueline and Maman represent precisely the dull, non-questioning adult whom Ionesco condemns in several passages of

his journal. In the above quotation concerning the paradise of childhood, for example, Ionesco speaks of those for whom "les choses ne sont plus étonnantes. Lorsque le monde vous semble <<déjà vu>>; lorsqu'on s'est habitué à l'existence, on devient adulte" (1968, 250; see above). Elsewhere Ionesco criticizes the straight-faced people who have forgotten how to ask "why": "Les hommes sérieux, ceux qu'on appelle 'les adultes' se disent: 'Bon, il en est ainsi, cela est donné, nous ne savons pas ce que c'est, arrangeons-nous avec ce qui est, arrangeons cela, arrangeons-nous entre nous" (1968, 133).

In each of the *contes* a clash notably takes place between the forces of "playful absurdity" and "dull anti-absurdity." Maman and Jacqueline enter briefly at crucial points either to denounce Papa and/or to try to pull him and Josette back to the rational, everyday world. Significantly, all of the stories end with either Jacqueline or Maman interrupting Josette's and Papa's activities and/or demonstrating their total lack of desire to assume even the slightest trace of an absurdist frame of mind. For example, in the third *conte* Maman is the one who yanks Papa and Josette from their imaginary voyage to the heavens with a command that they return to the world of the commonplace immediately: "A ce moment, la maman entre et dit: 'Allons, descendez du lit et habillez-vous.'" This is notably followed by a curt rebuke to her incorrigible absurdist husband: "'Tu vas la rendre idiote avec tes bêtises!'" (Ionesco 1976a, n.p.). This echoes the prosaically-minded Jacqueline's response to Papa's destruction of logical speech in the second *conte*: "—Ah! encore les bêtises de son papa!.."

(Ionesco 1970, n.p.).

Maman and Jaqueline thus are clearly part of the class of banal people who have lost the power to think and who furthermore have no ability or desire to face the senselessness of existence. Speaking specifically of the difference between the ametaphysical masses who are prone to "rhinoceritis" and Bérenger who, like Papa and Josette, is one of Ionesco's rare characters who can still see and be surprised by the absurdity of life, Richard Coe writes:

> Destiny has placed man in an impossible situation, and his natural reaction is to shut his eyes and to bury his head in the sand. To the average mortal, the merest glimpse of the absurd is disconcerting, if not terrifying; and he has reason to be afraid, for the first glimpse of the absurd is the first moment of lucidity, and thenceforward there is no turning back: lucidity breeds further awareness, further awareness breeds more lucidity, until in the end he is faced, like Bérenger, with two intolerable alternatives: to accept the absurd, or to revolt against it—knowing full well that it is the condition of existence, and therefore that revolt is again absurdity raised to the *n*th degree. This is the *angoisse* of Ionesco's world (Coe 1961, 92).

At the same time, Maman and Jacqueline are, like those with the infamous pachyderm disease, also unthinking conformists. Since the mother and the maid are specifically part of Papa's and Josette's domestic realm, the adult reader might see that they represent, in particular, Ionesco's favourite sub-category of petit bourgeois, i.e., the "family [which is] the agent of society's pressures toward conformity" (Esslin

1961, 138). In their condemnation of Papa, Maman, and Jacqueline are similar, for example, to the Jacques family in *Jacques ou la Soumission* who want their rebellious son to get in line and to declare once and for all: "J'adore les pommes de terre au lard!" (Ionesco 1991, 94). In this play Jacques's sister, Jacqueline, is one of the characters who badgers him endlessly to mend his ways. Thus the maid in the *contes* is related to this character both in name and in spirit. In addition, connections can be seen between Jacqueline and other "common sense" maids who are found elsewhere in Ionesco: "The impertinent maid who appears so often in Molière as the voice of common sense, for example, may perform the same function in Ionesco's theater, as in *La Leçon*, *L'Impromptu de l'Alma ou le Caméléon du berger*, and even to some extent *La Cantatrice chauve*" (Lane 18).

3.3.4. Estranged Spouses

The fact that the absurdity/anti-absurdity conflict in the *contes* pins namely husband against wife means that the adult reader might furthermore see the stories in light of the following theme: "non-communication between people who would ordinarily be thought to be in close contact [which] is a favourite with Ionesco" (Brookes and Fraenkel 14). In fact, Maman hardly appears in the stories at all, being disposed of in a variety of ways. As François Caradec points out, the titles of the four tales could easily be changed to: "«Maman dort», «Maman est sortie», «Maman prend son bain», «Maman est partie»" (223).

Regarding Maman's and Papa's relationship, the narrator informs us in the first tale that she and Papa have recently been out on a date together. As the quotation already cited above states: "La veille, ils étaient allés au théâtre, au restaurant, puis après le restaurant au guignol" (Ionesco 1969, n.p.). However, in the third *conte* the relationship between the couple is shown to be somewhat tenuous as Papa is said to be tired after having gone out *alone*: "Le papa, lui, dormait encore, parce que hier soir, tout seul, il avait été au restaurant, et puis après au guignol, et puis après encore au restaurant" (Ionesco 1976a, n.p.; see above).

In the fourth *conte* there is clearly something very strange going on between Maman and Papa. According to the narrator, Maman has gone to the country for a few days, and Papa has taken this opportunity to have a decadent feast: "Papa a profité de cette absence pour manger beaucoup de saucisson, pour boire de la bière, pour manger du pâté de cochon, et beaucoup d'autres choses que maman l'empêche de manger parce que c'est pas bon pour la santé" (Ionesco 1976b, n.p.). Despite Maman's concern for Papa's health (which is one more rational thing that Papa wants to protest against anyway), whether or not she cares for him is put into question in a way that the child reader would not likely understand. Josette suggests at one point that they should write to Maman or phone her at her mother's house in the country. However, Papa is suspicious about her departure. "Papa dit: 'Faut pas téléphoner.' Et puis *papa dit pour lui-même*: 'Parce qu'elle est peut-être autre part'" (Ionesco 1976b, n.p., my italics). Papa's questions to Maman at the end of the story, i.e., "Il

faisait beau à la campagne?... Comment va ta mère?" can thus be read as a desire to test her honesty. But the fact that she does not answer leaves the ending of the story open while stressing the fact that the communication between Maman and Papa is clearly faulty.[20]

In this way, Papa and Maman can be seen as a version of the estranged Ionescan couple of which there are a great many. In *Présent passé*, in which the theme of conflict between people is all-pervasive, one of the central concerns is notably the growing rift between Ionesco's own parents (e.g., 28-30). Perhaps it was this disturbing reality that Ionesco transformed into fiction time and time again. For example, Amédée and Madeleine in *Amédée ou Comment s'en débarrasser* have a growing corpse in their bedroom which symbolizes their dead love. And the Martins in *La Cantatrice chauve* seem to have hardly anything in common: their discovery in scene iv that they were together in the same train compartment, live in the same house, sleep in the same bed, etc. "parodies the failure of love, the emptiness of marriage wherein husband and wife are unable to know each other" (A. Lewis 35).

It is notably Ionescan women who tend to be critical of their husbands and not the other way around. For example, the shrewish Madeleine in *Amédée* conveys insults, makes demands, and gives orders to her hermit-like, failed playwright spouse. And Madeleine in *Victimes du devoir* is a "sharp-tongued, sock-darning wife" (Gaensbauer 75) who becomes the accomplice of a detective who arrives out of the blue to interrogate her husband. A comment that Nancy Lane makes concerning how these two

[20]See Gardaz 151-2 concerning the conclusion of the fourth *conte*.

Madeleines and other Ionescan wives clash with their spouses could also apply to the relationship between Maman and Papa in the *contes*:

> If the male protagonists are visionary, artistic idealists who long to escape the confines of earth and time, women are often practical figures who condemn the male characters' search for an Edenic state of grace as impractical and tie them to earth (as in *Victimes du devoir*, *Amédée*, *Piéton de l'air*, and *La Soif et la Faim*) (19).

Like these other pairs, then, Papa and Maman are in the absurd situation of being isolated "in spite of being members of what ought to be an organic community" (Esslin 1961, 138). And in the *contes*, paradoxically, what is to blame for this absurd state of things happens to be Papa's absurdity—or rather Maman's lack of it.

3.3.5. Other Intertextual Connections

Aside from all of the above, there are numerous other intertextual connections that the adult reader could see between Ionesco's children's literature and his works for adults. I would like to briefly draw attention to two more ties that exist specifically between Ionesco's plays and the first and the fourth stories.

In the first *conte*, as I have mentioned, Papa tells Josette a wacky story in which a family, their relatives and friends, etc. are all named Jacqueline. Here is an excerpt:

> L'oncle et la tante, qui s'appelaient Jacqueline, avaient des amis qui s'appelaient monsieur et madame Jacqueline, et qui avaient une petite fille qui s'appelait Jacqueline, et un petit garçon qui s'appelait Jacqueline, et la petite fille avait des poupées, trois poupées, qui s'appelaient: Jacqueline, Jacqueline, et Jacqueline (Ionesco 1969, n.p.).

While to the child reader this hypodiegetic narrative would likely be perceived as just happy nonsense, the adult reader would see that the characters Papa creates are closely related, for example, to the "carbon-copied" Bobby Watsons discussed by Mr. and Mrs. Smith in the opening scene of *La Cantatrice chauve*. As Ionesco explains, Bobby Watson would be "impossible à identifier, car les trois quarts des habitants de la ville, hommes, femmes, enfants, chats, idéologues, portaient le nom de Bobby Watson" (1962, 159). In the first *conte* it is similarly men, women, and children who are all "Jacquelines." But also, in a delightful added bit of absurdity, a house and a chamber pot are also given this name.

Marie-Claude Hubert, who briefly points out the link between the Jacquelines and Bobby Watsons, writes: "Convaincu que le langage n'est que le lieu de l'imprécision et de l'incertitude, voire du non-sens, Ionesco dote ses personnages de noms qui ne permettent pas de les différencier" (19). There is thus undoubtedly a connection between the Bobby Watsons, the Jacquelines, and the above "chat" language found in *Jacques ou la Soumission*. Additionally, the latter play likewise also has to do with the "renunciation of individuality" (Esslin 1961, 97), since in both *Jacques* and its sequel, *L'Avenir est dans les œufs ou il faut de tout pour*

faire un monde, all of the family members are either named Roberte or Jacques/Jacqueline (including the above-mentioned sister). Ionescan namesakes who represent a world of disintegrating individuality/identity are also found in *L'Impromptu de l'Alma*.[21] Therefore, the adult reader who knows that in Ionesco's drama "people, things, and words all seem to share the frightening tendency to proliferate" (Brookes and Fraenkel 13) would see that Josette's father similarly gives his daughter a strong dose of this frightening, yet at the same time very comic proliferation.

Another significant intertextual relationship between Ionesco's adult and children's works has to do with the fourth story, the one in which Papa engages Josette in an absurd game of hide-and-seek. The fact that Papa makes Josette think that he is simultaneously both behind and not behind the bathroom door can be related, first of all, to the sort of upside-down logic which pervades all of "Ionescoland" (Lamont 1993, 13): here, a corpse can grow in a bedroom year after year; empty chairs and dishes multiply; people fly and lay eggs; and, of course, the *cantatrice chauve* "se coiffe toujours de la même façon."

Being and not being behind the door can also specifically be related to something that occurs in scene viii of *La Cantatrice chauve*. The Smiths and the Martins come to the conclusion that someone both is and is not at

[21]In this satire of Parisian drama critics there are three men named Bartholoméus, an allustion to Roland Barthes and also Beaumarchais's Bartholo. The similarity of the Bartholoméuses is stressed by the fact that the opening scene is repeated three times with each of them speaking exactly the same lines as they enter to greet the playwright "Ionesco."

the door when they hear the doorbell ring (even though the Fire Chief, like Josette's Papa, has clearly been there all the time). And being there and not there is also the issue in the subsequent scene of the play when Mme Martin remarks to her husband: "Ce matin, quand tu t'es regardé dans la glace tu ne t'es pas vu," and he replies: "C'est parce que je n'étais pas encore là" (Ionesco 1991, 37).

Josette's act of searching for Papa when she already knows that he is in the bathroom is also very much like another perverted Ionescan game of "cache-cache": the one which takes place in *La Soif et la Faim*. When Jean hides from his wife, Marie-Madeleine, he keeps disappearing and reappearing like a Jack-in-the-Box. Echoing several of the places where Josette looks for her father (see above), Marie-Madeleine calls out: "Mon petit Jean, mon petit Jeannot, es-tu là-bas? Es-tu ici? Es-tu derrière l'armoire, dans le placard, dans le buffet, dans le couloir, à la cuisine... Où es-tu? Derrière la porte?" (Ionesco 1991, 819). Lamont writes that during this scene "the audience catches glimpses of the elusive husband's head, of an arm, a leg; they do not seem to belong to the same body. (In performance, there are of course extra props: a head, separate limbs. A disquieting effect of dismemberment and ubiquity is achieved by this *commedia dell'arte* harlequinade)" (1993, 211). Therefore, while Josette cannot find Papa because he is nowhere, conversely, Marie-Madeleine cannot locate her husband for the reason that Jean appears to be everywhere.

In *La Soif et la Faim*, however, the game hardly ends with a warm embrace, as it does when Josette's Papa finally appears (see above).

Instead, Jean deserts his wife, which is, incidentally, what Ionesco's own father eventually did to his mother:

> As [Marie-Madeleine] seeks her invisible husband, echoing his haunting, taunting 'Coucou! Coucou!' to locate his hiding place, the audience realizes that he will not return. Jean has succeeded in turning his kind, forgiving mother-wife into a bewildered, humiliated, cheated, tragically unhappy playmate" (Lamont 211).

In this case, as in many others, Papa thus offers his daughter the chance to partake in (and the reader gets to read about) a kinder, gentler absurdity than what is presented in the adult Ionesco. For the adult readership of the *contes*, the reading experience, therefore, is simultaneously one of both perceiving important similarities, as well as significant differences.

3.4. Ambivalent Illustrations

While *Présent passé* most certainly is addressed to (and marketed for) an adult audience, and reading the *contes* in this context would likely influence the adult reader to naturalize them against the backdrop of the surrounding journal entries, as well as in relation to other non-fictional and dramatic works by Ionesco, it is interesting that in many ways the picture book versions also call upon the adult reader to read as an "adult." Of all the paratextual features,[22] it is probably the illustrations, and

[22]Genette defines the *paratexte* as "titre, sous-titre, intertitres; préfaces, postfaces, avertissements, avant-propos, etc.; notes marginales, infrapaginales, terminales; épigraphes; illustrations; prières d'insérer, bande, jaquette, et bien d'autres types de

particularly what appears on the cover, that play the most important role in making us recognize a book as a children's book: we are, after all, as Stanley Fish says, members of "interpretive communities" who recognize certain conventions immediately (11). Yet, paradoxically, the very same illustrations that encourage us to buy/critique/perceive a work as "children's literature" can also partake in the same sort of blurring of boundaries between literatures and readerships that I have been describing thus far.

It is important to know that the *albums* versions of the stories, *Contes numéros 1 (2,3,4) pour enfants de moins de trois ans*, were the product of a creative partnership between the young American editor Harlin Quist and the teacher/editor François Ruy-Vidal. It was their goal, starting in the late 1960s, to produce a collection of new, modernist children's books that very intentionally would not just be for children. As Ruy-Vidal affirms about these books that were published under the Harlin Quist imprint:

> Il n'y a pas d'arts pour l'enfant, il y a l'Art.
> Il n'y a pas de graphisme pour enfants, il y a le graphisme.
> Il n'y a pas de couleurs pour enfants, il y a les couleurs.
> Il n' y a pas de littérature pour enfants, il y a la littérature.
> En partant de ces quatre principes, on peut dire qu'un livre pour enfants est un bon livre quand il est un bon livre pour tout le monde (quoted in Soriano, 461).[23]

signaux accessoires, autographes ou allographes, qui procurent au texte un entourage (variable) et parfois un commentaire, officiel ou officieux, dont le lecteur le plus puriste et le moins porté à l'érudition externe ne peut pas toujours disposer aussi facilement qu'il le voudrait et le prétend" (9).

Nicholas Paley explains that in order to have "literature" as opposed to "children's literature," the narratives selected by Quist and Ruy-Vidal

> were frequently written by authors who were more well-known for their work at the vanguard of contemporary adult literature than for their contributions to children's writing. In addition to Eugene Ionesco and Richard Hughes, Quist also published books by Marguerite Duras, Shirley Jackson, Mark Van Doren, Françoise Mallet-Joris, and Robert Graves (111).

In order to further heighten the appeal of their publications for a dual audience and to make the children's book into nothing less than an "art object" (Paley 111; see also Marantz), Quist and Ruy-Vidal sought "young, innovative European artists" (Paley 111) to work as their illustrators. These "imagiers, qui n'ignorent rien des grands courants de l'art contemporain" (Soriano 459), included Bernard Bonhomme, Jacqueline Duhème, Guillermo Mordillo, Nicole Claveloux (who illustrated Ionesco's fourth *Conte*), and Étienne Delessert (the illustrator for *Contes N° 1* and *N° 2*.).[24]

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[23]This recalls the very similar view of C.S. Lewis. See "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" in Sheila Egoff et al., eds. *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature* (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1980) 207-20.

[24]Elisabeth Gardaz draws attention to an interesting fact: the story which would later become *Conte numéro 4* was in *Présent passé* the "Deuxième conte" and vice-versa. The reason for this, according to the explanation Gardaz got directly from François Ruy-Vidal, is that, although Etienne Delessert was hired to illustrate all four of Ionesco's children's books, he ended up only doing the first and the fourth stories from

Since Delessert is the "interpreter of the text" (Golden 103) who was the most inclined toward ambivalence when creating the pictures for Ionesco's stories, it is his work that I would like to focus on here. Incidentally, in *Étienne Delessert* (1992) Janine Despinette, a children's literature specialist, notes that ambivalence plays a very prominent part in Delessert's work as a whole: "Aimed at adults as well as children, his images, even those for the very young, invite myriad interpretations, a hundred whys and becauses" (19). Judy Garlan, art director at *The Atlantic Monthly* where Delessert's work has often appeared, similarly comments that Delessert seems "to understand how blurry the line is between childhood and adulthood" (*Étienne Delessert* 15). Delessert notably did the illustrations for the *Contes* early in his career, when he was only in his twenties, and these illustrations earned him much critical acclaim.[25] Perhaps this acclaim played a role in encouraging Delessert to continue to produce the sort of ambivalent images for which he is now known.

Présent passé because "c'était ses deux préférés" (Gardaz 155). These stories came out in picture book format numbered "one" and "two." Philippe Corentin did the illustrations for the third story which had been the third to begin with. Nicole Claveloux then illustrated the fourth story, i.e., the one which had originally been the second of the series. (I have also found an additional version of the fourth story in English translation that was illustrated by Jean-Michel Nicollet). Having just received a letter from Delessert himself, I now understand that it was not a lack of interest but rather another reason which made it impossible for him to continue working on Ionesco's tales. Delessert writes: "I do regret that the four stories are not featuring the same characters, painted with a common style" (Letter to the author, 20 January 1999).

[25]See Paley 114 regarding the awards Delessert received, in particular, for *Story Number 1.*

As in the case of Ionesco's texts, what we find with Delessert's illustrations is that he combines both the very childish or childlike with that which could only be comprehended by the adult reader (including Delessert himself). Regarding addressing illustrations to a child audience, Marc Soriano writes that "parce qu'ils s'adressent à des enfants, [certains illustrateurs] croient que l'illustration la plus adaptée, c'est celle qui copie le dessin d'enfant ou s'en inspire directement" (334). In many ways, this is what Delessert does via his very bright, whimsical pictures. In the first *Conte*, for example, the Jacqueline family is portrayed, all with the same cheery big faces, blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and blond curls, wearing matching striped outfits. Delessert notably makes most of the family's shoes point to the right while their torsos face directly forward, an impossible physical reality that recalls the way child artists often distort the human form.

Equally childlike and also very surrealistic are a series of illlustrations in *Conte numéro 2* concerning Josette's mother. When describing Maman's departure, Jacqueline repeatedly uses the words "rose" (which, of course, means both "pink" and "rose") and "fleurs":

> Jacqueline, la femme de ménage, a dit à Josette que sa maman venait de sortir avec son parapluie rose et ses gants roses, et ses souliers roses, et son chapeau rose... avec sa jolie robe avec des fleurs, avec son beau manteau avec des fleurs, avec ses beaux bas avec des fleurs, avec un beau bouquet de fleurs dans les mains.. elle a une bouche comme une fleur. Elle a un tout petit nez rose comme une fleur. Elle a des cheveux comme des fleurs. Elle a des fleurs dans

les cheveux (Ionesco 1970, n.p.).

In Delessert's wild illustration of what we might take to be Josette's mental picture of this description (coupled perhaps with a stroll through Josette's subconscious), Maman both emerges playfully from (predominantly) pink and purple striped flowers, and flowers emerge from Maman (e.g., hands and a foot come out of blooms; Maman's head becomes the pistil of the largest flower while flowers spring from her hair and mouth, etc.). On the following two pages, above a Parisian-New Yorkian skyline (recalling the two locations of the Harlin Quist enterprise), the "playful spiral of absurdity" (*Étienne Delessert* 18) continues: Maman drives a giant pink flower contraption which has an exhaust pipe pedicel. Similar smaller contraptions transport an owl (which has a large piece of rainbow in its beak); a bird; a monkey (with huge human ears); a smiling clown; a star; a watch; and two red crosses (out of which spring the remaining fragments of the rainbow, which perhaps represent "colourful words"). Another of these wonderful, wacky contraptions carries no passenger but is labelled "taxi."

Delessert's attempt to illustrate in a childlike fashion reaches its highest point in a two-page spread near the end of the second *Conte*. Here, there is a sudden change of both medium and style: rather scribbly crayon provides a break from the much more refined gouaches which both precede and follow. As Perry Nodelman explains in *Words About Pictures* (1988), "our association of crayons with children might well lead us to expect childlike qualities in crayon work; sharing such

associations, an artist... might well choose such a medium in order to create childlike drawings" (75-6). Delessert's switch to crayon, used specifically as if by a child, can thus be seen as a visual example of Rabinowitz's "Rules of Rupture": i.e., "Disruptions attract our notice" (1987, 65), and authors (or illustrators) know that the audience will perceive such disruptions as significant. This most "immature" illustration notably celebrates the point in the story when Papa's and Josette's puerile nonsense language reaches its glorious climax, i.e., when Josette makes the ludicrous claims that she has "dix yeux pour marcher, [et] deux doigts pour regarder" (Ionesco 1970, n.p.), etc. As Delessert so beautifully shows, Josette's head has, in fact, become her "derrière" (fig. 1).

While Delessert's childish/childlike illustrations might be meant for (and can certainly be immensely enjoyed by) both child and adult, at the same time, a division between audiences is implied by certain allusions made by the artist. Celia Catlett Anderson writes regarding pictorial allusions that "celles-ci peuvent aller de simples exemples compréhensibles par de tout jeunes enfants à des allusions plus sophistiquées qui ne sont plus accessibles qu'à des personnes (adultes ou enfants) disposant d'une bonne connaissance du monde de la culture et des arts" (1991, 63). Most likely, however, the latter type of allusion is predominantly the domain of adults; whereas the former variety is truly comprehensible by both adults and children. By combining the two sorts of allusions, Delessert parallels and also draws attention to the pervasive ambivalence of Ionesco's texts.

Figure 1. Illustration from *Conte numéro 2* by Eugène Ionesco, illustrated by Étienne Delessert. Copyright © 1970 by Étienne Delessert. Reprinted by permission of Étienne Delessert.

Here is an account of some of the bi-levelled pictorial play that occurs in *Conte numéro 1*:

According to Papa's narrative, the Jacqueline family goes one day, to the "bois de Boulogne." Providing his own very unique interpretation, Delessert has the Jacquelines, as well as the little girl Jacqueline's three dolls (Jacqueline, Jacqueline, and Jacqueline), and the little boy's lead soldiers (also named Jacqueline), etc. arrive at a most mysterious place where an array of curious beast statues is found atop high pedestals. One of these beasts is the same sort of monkey with human ears found in the above flower contraption illustration from *Conte numéro 2*. Thus, both the child and adult reading the first two *Contes* in succession could appreciate this interpictorial connection which serves to emphasize the overall nonsense of both works.

Aside from this internal allusion, also fully accessible to most child readers would be the following external allusion: the helium balloon held by one of the Jacqueline mothers in the park is in the form of none other than one of Maurice Sendak's "Wild Things" from *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963). Regarding "Max in his wolf suit and the monsters he tames," John Cech writes that they "have taken a permanent place in American popular culture and the global mythology of childhood" (1995, 585). Given that Sendak has been published in over a dozen languages, this allusion would likely be naturalizable by more than just North American readers. In France, incidentally, Sendak is among the "grands artistes étrangers" which the publishing house École des Loisirs "a révélé

ou rendu plus familiers au public français" (Soriano 214).

On the other hand, Delessert's bowler-wearing rhinocerous statue on the previous page of *Conte numéro 1* alludes to a play by a Theatre of the Absurd playwright whose name, let alone his plays, probably would mean little or nothing to the child reader (fig. 2). According to a label at the base of the pedestal, it is the all-knowing, all-powerful Zeus who is supposed to be found here; but one of those huge, unreasoning and brutish perissodactyls, which believe they have discovered the one and only Truth, has somehow displaced him. Zeus has been reduced to being a small swan under the rhino's belly, eyeing the ice cream cone being held by one of the junior female Jacquelines. Regarding this scene, Delessert offers the following explanation which other adult readers versed in mythology could perhaps come to on their own: "Leda was the wife of Tyndare. Zeus took the shape of a swan to seduce her. I wanted to show the ambivalent situation: the little girl is not scared of the monsters, and is even playing with the swan" (Letter to the author, 20 January 1999).

Another rhinocerous is notably found earlier in Delessert's illustrations for *Conte numéro 1*: when Jacqueline (the maid) is depicted bringing Josette's parents a tray filled with breakfast, the morning mail, and also little Josette. Behind the ham and eggs and the strawberry jam is a postcard of a rhino, again wearing a bowler (a reminder of its former humanity?). But, in (sharp) contrast to the above statue version, here the rhino's horn has stabbed a poor bird right through the middle. As is so often the case, Delessert piles absurdity on top of Ionesco's own. Incidentally, with their striped trim, the bowlers worn by the two

Figure 2. Illustration from *Conte numéro 1* by Eugène Ionesco, illustrated by Étienne Delessert. Copyright © 1968 by Étienne Delessert. Reprinted by permission of Étienne Delessert.

rhinos are identical to those on the heads of the male Jacquelines, and all the Jacquelines, including the maid, are linked to the rhinos by their striped outfits. This implies a connection between the proliferating "rational" quadrupeds and the common-sense maid, Jacqueline, who, unbeknownst to her, is the focus of Papa's very irrational tale.

Another of Delessert's allusions, probably also intended for and naturalizable only by adults, is found in an illustration of Josette gobbling up the breakfast that her parents, in their still somnolent state, have declined. Seated beside a jug, wearing a feathered cap that covers her eyes, and licking her right index finger while holding a bowl in her left hand, Josette has been transformed into the child in the left foreground of Pieter Bruegel's *Wedding Banquet.*

One more important pictorial allusion likewise more for adults than children is found on the final page of *Conte numéro 1.* When the people in the store are shocked and frightened by the version of the "Jacqueline Family" story which Josette tells to a little girl whom she meets there (and who also just happens to be called Jacqueline), the maid explains to them: "Ce n'est rien... ne vous inquiétez pas, ce sont les histoires idiotes que lui raconte son papa" (Ionesco 1970, n.p.). By placing on Jacqueline's finger a ring depicting Descartes, Delessert is perhaps reminding the adult reader that Ionesco's "use of nonsense is calculated to drill a hole in the thick wall of common sense—the quality that Descartes proclaimed as the best apportioned and most universal of all human attributes" (Lamont 1993, 26). Given the previous images of rhinos in the first *Conte*, we

might recall that in *Rhinocéros*, "Ionesco demystifies the cult of rationalism, Descartes' legacy to Western culture" (Lamont 1993, 145).

3.5. The "5ème Conte"

In Ionesco's *contes*, journals, plays, etc., intertextual connections thus abound, and in his pictorial interpretations of the first two *Contes*, Delessert adds many more planes of meaning and allusion. By way of conclusion, I would like to relate the fact that Ionesco wrote the manuscript for one other *conte*. He kindly sent a copy of it to me along with one of his letters. This story, too, would appear to be addressed not only to the child reader, but also to the adult who knows that throughout his life and in his writing, Ionesco's most overwhelming obsession was with death.

A very important fact undoubtedly is that in stories 1-4 Josette's age "precedes by one year the child Ionesco's discovery of mortality," (Lamont 1993, 26). As Ionesco writes in his journal *Découvertes*:

> À quatre ans, j'ai appris la mort. J'ai hurlé de désespoir. Ensuite j'ai eu peur pour ma mère sachant que j'allais la perdre, que cela ne pouvait pas ne pas arriver et je me blottissais contre elle pour m'attacher à sa présence non immortelle, et je m'accrochais à elle et je m'agrippais et la tirais comme pour l'arracher à la durée (58).[26]

Thus Josette, Marie-France, and the official reader of the first four

[26]Elsewhere Ionesco writes about the mind-boggling "but de l'existence" (1967, 39): "Il y a l'âge d'or: c'est l'âge de l'enfance, de l'ignorance; dès que l'on sait que l'on va mourir, l'enfance est terminée" (1967, 31).

contes are all not only still blissfully able to be astonished by the world, but are also safe from knowing about what awaits them and those whom they love. In the fifth *conte*, however, Josette "est presque vieille. Elle aura bientôt cinq ans" ("5ème Conte," 1). Two years over the age of the Christ-like Josette, this almost five-year old protagonist can therefore no longer be sheltered from the "ultimate paradox of an illogical existence" (A. Lewis 31). Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that she is made to be almost five specifically so that death can be the focus of the story.

It is worthy of note that what allowed Ionesco to leave Romania in 1938 was a fellowship from the French government to write a dissertation in Paris on "Le Péché et la mort dans la poésie française depuis Baudelaire" (Ionesco 1991, LXXVII). While he apparently never even seriously began this project, titles like *Tueur sans gages*, *Le roi se meurt*, *Voyages chez les morts*, and *Jeux de massacre* show that his concern with death found a new outlet when he became a playwright.[27] Or, rather, it was this obsession which led him to become a writer in the first place:

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[27]Aside from the plays mentioned above, we also see in Ionesco's work, for example, the death of Bobby Watson in *La Cantatrice chauve*; the double suicide of the couple in *Les Chaises*; and the symbolic death of the man in *Le Nouveau locataire*. Many entries concerning death are to be found in *Notes et contre-notes* (1962), *Journal en miettes* (1967), and also *Présent passé, passé present* (1968). Among the studies of the theme of death in Ionesco are: Jan Kott's "Ionesco, or a Pregnant Death," *The Dream and the Play: Ionesco's Theatrical Quest*, ed. Moshe Lazar (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1982) 121-32, and Gilles Ernst's "Déjà Fini," *Lectures de Ionesco* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996) 87-112.

> A pre-occupation with death, the evanescence and fleetingness of human existence, is the prevailing theme of all of Ionesco's writings: plays, essays, stories, and the series of diaires and jottings he has published over the years. The fact that we are bound to disappear into non-being casts its shadow over everything we do and are, Ionesco feels, and makes us experience our existence as ultimately futile and meaningless (Esslin 1967, 1).

Indeed, Ionesco himself says in *Notes et contre-notes*: "J'écris... pour crier ma peur de mourir, mon humiliation de mourir (309). And one critic argues that by endlessly presenting death in his writing, Ionesco is attempting to cure himself of his overwhelming fear: "Répondant à une hantise intime, il exorcise la peur et aboutit à une thanatothérapie, guérison de la mort par la mort" (Ernst 96). However, it is not likely that Ionesco was ever cured. Martin Esslin explains, for example, that the fear of death apparently permeated even what should have been Ionesco's happiest moments. Esslin tells about how at a party in London to celebrate the very successful opening of *Rhinoceros*, he remarked to Ionesco's wife that surely her husband must be extremely happy. But she answered: "Non, monsieur. Il est triste... . Il a peur de la mort" (quoted in Esslin 1967, 1).

Knowing this background information and some of the specific plays in question, the adult reader will therefore see that the "5ème Conte," as it is entitled in Ionesco's manuscript, is intimately connected to the whole of Ionesco's adult œuvre and thought. At the same time the story could also be naturalized by children in relation to other children's books which deal

openly with death, as well as against the backdrop of the child reader's own concerns and questions about mortality.[28]

In the story, Papa specifically presents Josette with a picture of death as the absurd ending to our absurd lives. As they visit various sights in Paris (e.g., Notre-Dame, the Louvre) Josette learns Papa's quirky ideas concerning why we have to die and what it may involve. But rather than let her cry out in anguish like the young Eugène, Papa comes up with a rather humorous explanation. He justifies the absurdity of death by suggesting that God is an artist who simply wants to create the world twice:

> Josette: Je vais être vieille et je vais mourir moi aussi? Alors c'était pas la peine d'être nés, puisque nous allons tous mourir. Pourquoi c'est comme ça?
> Papa: Je ne sais pas, parce que (après une mûre réflexion), pour que les gens et les fleurs et les pierres, quand ils vont ressusciter, ils seront plus beaux qu'avant. C'est le Bon Dieu qui a dit ça.
> Josette: Il aurait pu nous faire plus beaux tout de suite.
> Papa: Non. C'est comme le peintre qui fait d'abord un dessin et après d'après le dessin, un tableau plus beau que le dessin. C'est comme Jean, Monsieur Jean, qui est sculpteur, il fait une esquisse ou bien une ébauche et d'après le dessin

[28]Regarding children's books about death, see, for example, Marian Pyles' *Death and Dying in Children's and Young People's Literature: A Survey and Bibliography* (1988). There are also many dissertations concerning this issue, including Lawrence Bailis' "The Concept of Death in Children's Literature on Death," Case Western Reserve U, 1974 and Phyllis Perry's "A Comparative Analysis of the Treament of the Death Theme in Children's and Adolescent Literature Pre and Post 1970," U of Colorado, 1980. See also Chukovskii's "From Two to Five" in which there is a short section concerning the question of death as raised mostly by four and five year-olds (46-50).

> ou l'ébauche qu'il a faite il fait une belle statue, mais toi et moi, nous serons des statues qui bougeront et qui respireront. Maintenant nous sommes seulement des dessins.
> Josette: C'est drôle tout ça. A la place du Bon Dieu, moi je nous ferais tous beaux tout de suite.
> Papa: Qu'est-ce que tu veux, c'est comme ça, c'est le métier du Bon Dieu ("5ème Conte," 4).

The adult reader could see that the conception of death in this story is clearly rooted in the fact that

> Ionesco adhère—plus ou moins consciemment—à une longue tradition religieuse et mystique qui englobe le christianisme et le bouddhisme: le profane doit mourir pour renaître à la vie supérieure que confère l'initiation. Mais le doute subsiste, lancinant pour le dramaturge: son épouse et sa fille croient, mais lui, n'a point de certitude (Ionesco 1991, 1738).

It would appear then that Papa offers Josette a certitude that Ionesco himself could never have offered his own daughter.

As in the previous four stories, which touch on such questions as the loss of individuality, the destruction of language, and being/non-being, in the "5ème Conte" Papa thus continues to help his daughter "face reality in all its senselessness... and to laugh at it" (Esslin 1961, 316; cf. above). Papa's description of the soul, for example, is particularly amusing: "L'âme c'est toi, c'est ta maman, c'est moi, mais sans les habits, sans les bras, sans les jambes, sans le corps. L'âme, c'est toi, c'est moi" ("5ème

Conte," 1). This makes Josette decide later on when they are in the Louvre that the missing head of the headless statue they see must be its soul.

At one point in this story there is what appears to be an allusion to Ionesco's own life: Papa and Josette recall the death of "un petit voisin, âgé d'un an, mort d'une méningite" ("5ème Conte," 5). In fact, as the adult reader might know, Ionesco's own brother, Mircea, died of meningitis at the age of one (Ionesco 1991, LXIX). At that time Eugène himself would have been around four. Needless to say, the event had a profound effect on him, contributing to or perhaps even initiating the future playwright's obsession with death.

In light of the hide-and-seek game played in the fourth story and what I have discussed above, it is interesting to note that one of the few entries concerning Mircea in *Présent passé*—and "le seul souvenir, tellement vague, que je garde de lui" (1968, 17)—concerns specifically how Eugène, his sister, and his parents played *cache-cache* with little Mircea, hiding, like Josette's father, behind a door:

> Nous allons tous les quatre dans la chambre à côté. Mircea se taît. Il nous attend. Nous surgissons brusquement par la petite porte, près de la fenêtre: ma sœur et moi d'abord, derrière nous, à une très grande altitude, nous parents, dans l'ouverture de la porte. Dès qu'il nous aperçoit, Mircea éclate de rire... . Nous sortons de la chambre, nous revenons, le même jeu, plusieurs fois (1968, 17).

As far as the publication of the "5ème Conte" is concerned, Gardaz mentions that Ionesco told her, as he told me in one of his letters, that it was supposed to be published by Gallimard as had been all of the other *Contes* (156). But for some reason this never occurred. Ionesco's fifth tale really would have been very appropriate for the Harlin Quist publishing program. As Quist once said: "I'm not interested in the book which is going to be read to a child at night time to put the child to sleep. My point is to wake the child up, to start him thinking, to stimulate him, to provoke him, and sometimes to torment him" (quoted in Paley, 112). Indeed, death is the focus of more than one Quist book, including Gordon Sheppard's *Adieu, Monsieur Poméranie* (1972, ill. de Jacques Rozier) and F. Mallet-Joris's *Les Feuilles mortes d'un bel été* (1974, ill. de Cath. Loeb). However, unfortunately, the Harlin Quist enterprise closed down in the late 1970s, first in Paris, then in New York (Paley 112); whereas the manuscript of Ionesco's fifth story is only dated December 17, 1982.

It turned out that Quist's "ambitious attempt deliberately to situate children—and childhood—near the center of the modernist enterprise" (Paley 112) and the desire to "transformer le livre en trait d'union entre l'adulte et l'enfant" (Soriano 463) were not an unrisky undertaking. Quist explains that very early on there were signs of trouble:

> *Story Number 1* was shot down in the U.S. I got hate mail. The children's book field is mostly dominated by women—a lot of heavy-handed librarians who control the reviewing situation. They said it was a cynical, money-making scheme—how dare I take an adult author like Ionesco with no ability to write for kids? They especially objected to the

> fact that the little girl's parents had hangovers (quoted in Paley, 113).

One critic, Elva Harmon, similarly felt that "Ionesco's Theatre of the Absurd may be tempting for adults, but his recent books for children are more likely to baffle and frighten than entertain" (quoted in Paley, 111).

Paley points out that given such negative views and reviews of Quist books and of Ionesco's, in particular, the books often did not make it to the all-important "traditional children's book marketplace—the libraries" (113). Referring to an article by Marjorie Frank entitled "Harlin Quist's Personal Catch 22,"[29] Paley explains further that because of this,

> there were fewer opportunities for children actually to see and read Quist books. This lack of availability meant children had little chance to become familiar with Quist books' 'unique style, subject treatment, and art form', thereby affecting literary preference and demand. Lack of demand contributed to even fewer sales, and diminished sales, in turn, meant that there was less money available for the advertising that Quist needed to generate demand. Quist's overall situation was, as Frank concludes, a personal, economic, and literary Catch-22 (113).

From my analysis of Ionesco's *contes*, it is evident, however, that there is both much that is potentially naturalizable by child readers (which is not so very 'frightening' or 'baffling'), as well as a lot for adults. And the picture book versions of the *contes*, particularly those illustrated by

[29] This article was published in *Forecast* October 1975: 38-40.

Delessert, contribute further to a dual reading by which children and adults may both read as the children and adults they are, and/or be pulled toward the child they once were or the adult whom they will become.

Chapter Four

Michel Tournier's Happy *Plume* and Triumphant Pierrot

4.1. Tournier's Ideal Audience

While Ionesco and my Russian writers have engaged in addressing a plural audience of children and adults in a certain number of works, Michel Tournier provides an example of an adult/children's system author who decided that this sort of address would constitute one of his principal aesthetic ideals. Tournier's first foray away from a purely adult readership involved rewriting *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* (1967), his first novel which itself is a twentieth-century rewriting of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and for which Tournier was awarded the Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie Française. Tournier has continually maintained that the second version of his novel, *Vendredi ou la Vie sauvage* (1971), is, in fact, not only better than the first because it can be read by children, but also constitutes "l'âme du livre" (Tournier, quoted in Soriano, 506) and as such can be seen to represent a superior version for adults, too.[1]

Subsequently, Tournier repeated his initial experiment of creating a hypertext from his own (adult) hypotext by turning his novel *Gaspard,*

[1]On more than one occasion Tournier has been asked why, if he considers the second *Vendredi* so much superior to the first, he does not pull the first from circulation: his answer has to do with the fact that the original (adult) version obviously has "'ses défenseurs' à qui l'auteur ne voudrait jamais faire 'cette violence'" (Beckett 1997, 131).

Melchior et Balthazar (1980)—an "augmentation" (Genette 264) of the few lines in Matthew concerning the Magi—into *Les Rois Mages* (1983). For one critic, the latter work, similar to the second *Vendredi* in Tournier's opinion, is hardly an *appauvrissement.* It is rather the achievement of a sort of "discours parabolique" that is not just for children, but also engages the adult in "une lecture spéculative... . C'est la simplicité narrative des *Rois mages* qui laisse entrevoir la nature de leurs relations intertextuelles avec les Evangiles, relations qui transforment le récit symbolique de la venue des Mages en une parabole" (Worton 64).

Aside from *rewriting* his works in order to include both children and adults in his audience, over the last thirty years Tournier has also created a number of texts which from the outset he considers to be for both readerships. Short stories that have appeared in editions for adults, e.g., "Que ma joie demeure" and "La Fin de Robinson Crusoé," have been republished unaltered in children's editions and vice versa. The novel *La Goutte d'or* (1986), according to Tournier, is likewise intended for the children, as well as adults (Beckett 1995, 27, 29). Although, as Christopher Anderson astutely points out, while Tournier originally claimed that this work about a fifteen-year-old North African boy's initiatic voyage to France could even be read (surreptitiously) by nine or ten-year-olds, the author apparently later realized that this was a bit young: Tournier subsequently stated that perhaps twelve years of age would be appropriate (Anderson 1990, 172).

In an interview marking the appearance of his most recent work, *Éléazar ou la Source et le buisson* (1996), Tournier once again stresses the fact that young readers constitute a part—a very privileged part—of his hypothetical audience: "J'ai dédié *Éléazar* à une petite fille de onze ans, je vais juger mon roman d'après elle. S'il lui tombe des mains, j'estimerai qu'il est raté" (Tournier, 1996, 32). Presumably, the book, a sort of Western about an Irish pastor and his family who venture to the promised land of California, met with the girl's approval and was not tossed aside.

But of all of his works addressed to children and adults—and of all of his works in general—the one which Tournier considers to be "la meilleure chose [qu'il a] jamais écrite" (Tournier 1986, 21) is his story *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit* (1979). In the afterword to the Enfantimages/Gallimard edition, from which I quoted in part in my first chapter, Tournier describes how *Pierrot* achieves his ideal of *not* writing "children's literature," a field that is usually classified as one of the "littératures marginales" (Dubois 137) and is thus in Tournier's mind a "sous-littérature" (Tournier 1986, 21). The following words recall the perspective of Harlin Quist/Ruy-Vidal on the need for "literature" and not "children's literature" that I discussed in my chapter on Ionesco:

> Je n'écris pas de livres pour enfants, mais il m'arrive de tellement m'appliquer et d'avoir tant de talent que ce que j'écris puisse être lu aussi par les enfants. Quand ma plume est moins heureuse, ce qu'elle trace est tout juste bon pour les adultes. C'est ainsi que, selon moi, les plus hauts sommets de la littérature mondiale s'appellent *Le Chat*

> *botté* de Perrault, *La Reine des neiges* d'Andersen, les *Histoires comme ça* de Kipling, *Nils Holgersson* de Selma Lagerlöff, *Le Petit prince* de Saint-Exupéry. En comparaison, les tragédies de Racine, les drames de Shakespeare ou *La Comédie humaine* de Balzac ne sont que des œuvres de second ordre, puisqu'elles rebutent les enfants (Tournier 1979a, n.p.).

In the present chapter, it is my intention to focus specifically on *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit*, tracing, similarly to what I have done with other works, how the story could be read by children vs. how it could be interpreted by adults. I want especially to consider readings done by various scholars and present thoughts expressed by the author himself concerning the reading of his text. At the same time, I will offer ideas based on my own insight, including facts about the *commedia dell'arte* roots of the tale, as well as concerning other works (literary and otherwise) that feature Pierrot.

4.2. Cultural Mythology and Reading Tournier's *Pierrot*

Tournier explains that his ability to appeal to both children and adults has to do with his recourse to myth, which he defines as "une histoire fondamentale" and "une histoire que tout le monde connaît déjà" (Tournier 1977, 183-4). While a myth can be seen as a children's story with a "rez-de-chaussée enfantin," at the same time, "à un niveau supérieur, c'est toute une théorie de la connaissance, à un étage plus élevé encore cela devient morale, puis métaphysique, puis ontologie, etc., sans

cesser d'être la même histoire" (Tournier 1977, 183). As Martin Roberts explains, however, Tournier constructs his multi-layered narratives not just out of myths proper but rather uses "narratives and subjects drawn from the vast archive of what might be called Western cultural mythology" that includes legends, folktales, history, and literature (4). From the beginning of his writing career in the late 1960s, it has been Tournier's practice to create rewritings of this 'cultural mythology' in order to offer "a new, provocative and even scandalous reading of texts or tales which have faded into the tapestry of our culture and whose ability to surprise needs to be rediscovered" (Gascoigne 66).

We can recall once more Culler's notion of cultural *vraisemblance*, "a range of cultural stereotypes or accepted knowledge which a work may use" (141) and which may include such things as "a set of cultural references and a repertoire of types (characters)" (142). Thus, both versions of *Vendredi* ask that the reader naturalize in relation to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (or some version/understanding of it), a work that itself has a long history of being read by both children and adults.[2] Tournier's *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* and *Les Rois mages* are

[2]See Beckett 1995, 14, as well as Erhard Dahl's "From Spiritual Autobiography to Children's Book: The Life and Suprising Fate of 'Robinson Crusoe," *International Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship* 3.1 (1988): 9-17, and Elisabeth Stambor's "La naissance du mythe de *Robinson Crusoé* dans la littérature de jeunesse" in *Culture, Texte et Jeune Lecteur*, ed. Jean Perrot (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1992) 257-61. One study concerning how Tournier transformed Defoe's text to create his novel for adults is Anthony Purdy's "From Defoe's 'Crusoe' to Tournier's 'Vendredi': The Metamorphosis of a Myth," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 11 (1984): 216-35.

likewise based on something that is the common intellectual property of young and old: "l'épisode des mages, que chaque chrétien connaît depuis sa plus petite enfance" (Worton 58). And certainly it is not only Christians who are privy to this cultural text or to the iconography and other texts to which Matthew's words have given rise.

With *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit* Tournier invites his readers to read against what they might know of the *commedia dell'arte*, which originated in Tuscany in the sixteenth century, as well as in relation to the ubiquitous fragments thereof that remain to this day in the "tapestry of our culture" (Gascoigne 66; see above). Pierrot, Arlequin, and Colombine would be recognized by both Tournier's juvenile and adult readers as three of the most prominent *commedia* characters who continue to pop up here and there in plays, puppet shows, films, dance, works of art, children's stories, etc.[3] Aside from such things as "cheap and ordinary Pierrot paintings" and Pierrot and Colombine dolls, today *commedia* figures can even be found as "patterns on cushion fabrics" (Green xiii). And Jean de Palacio relates the fact that at the end of twentieth century Pierrot's image, in particular, is seemingly everywhere: "aux devantures des bazars, dans les vitrines des boulangers, des confiseurs et des coiffeurs, au hasard des étals et des échoppes, sur des foulards, des cendriers, des moutardiers, des tisanières et des affiches, en guise de marionnettes de toutes tailles et de tout acabit" (9).

As many children would likely know, a typical Pierrot doll or puppet

[3]A delightful American work about Pierrot is the "picture book in mime" by Tomie de Paola entitled *Sing, Pierrot, Sing* (New York: Harcourt, 1983).

comes with a teardrop under his eye. This no doubt has to do with the fact that according to the "histoire que tout le monde connaît déjà" (Tournier 1977, 184; see above), he is hopelessly in love with Colombine who does not return his love but rather falls for the lively and amusing Arlequin. Tournier creates a tale in which Pierrot is a timid, silent baker's boy with a pale, floury face and loose white clothing. Pierrot lives in the village of Pouldreuzic in a white house opposite the white house of Colombine, a laundress, whom he was once expected to marry: but they have been driven apart by the fact that Pierrot must work at night. One day Colombine's heart is captured by Arlequin, a nomadic painter and "beau parleur" who is dressed in his typical flashy costume covered with bright, polychromatic diamonds.[4] After eloping with Arlequin, Colombine eventually returns to Pierrot. And Arlequin is subsequently reintegrated into their company, too.

Aside from dealing with characters with whom the child reader would likely already be familiar, among the things that this story offers to the junior audience is, first of all, its fairy tale-like and mythic nature. The

[4]Louise Jones relates the interesting fact that originally Arlequin's costume was covered with patches. However, "in 17th-century France when Arlequin became a city man and a courtier, his costume lost its patch-work poverty to become an ordered and elegant set of diamonds (1984b, 41). See also Nicoll 69-70 concerning the evolution of Arlequin's costume. As far as Pierrot's costume is concerned, it, too, changed over time. It was, for example, the famous 19th-century Pierrot, Jean-Gaspard Deburau (see below), who replaced Pierrot's typical floppy, white hat with a black skullcap in order to draw more attention to the expressions on his white face (Jones 1984b, 43). Danièle Bour, illustrator for the 1979 edition of *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit*, places precisely this type of cap on her Pierrot's head (see my Fig. 1). An example of the floppy hat is found in Antoine Watteau's *Italian Comedians* (c. 1719) which is reproduced in Storey (1978), Fig. 3.

focus of the story is Colombine's initiatic journey which, like countless other literary journeys that children would probably know, takes a circular course and ends happily. After a summer with Arlequin, Colombine is prompted to go back to her village and to the sedentary Pierrot by the darkness, the white wintry cold, and especially a letter written by Pierrot, a talented writer, that explains his "secrets de la nuit," i.e., that his night is full of vivid colours that are far more profound and beautiful than the superficial diurnal hues of Arlequin: "Ma nuit n'est pas noire, elle est bleue! Et c'est un bleu qu'on respire. Mon four n'est pas noir, il est doré! Et c'est un or qui se mange" (Tournier 1979a, n.p.).[5] With Colombine's return to Pouldreuzic comes a new understanding of herself and of Pierrot's nocturnal world, a world that had previously repelled her.

Aside from offering young readers a tale that involves an initiation for Colombine, this story also asks the reader to partake in another important initiation. Lynn Penrod explains that in Tournier's literature which can be read 'also by children', there are

> deux motifs qui reviennent sans cesse: l'intérêt que porte l'auteur au rôle du mythe, dans la vie quotidienne aussi bien que dans la littérature, et sa préoccupation avec la complexité et l'ambiguïté de l'identité sexuelle du sujet humain, sa réflexion littéraire soutenue sur ce que signifie au juste le fait d'être homme ou femme, mâle ou femelle,

[5]In Regnard's *La Coquette* (1691) we similarly see how Pierrot expresses himself in a love letter to Colombine, the daughter of Pierrot's master (Storey 26-7). However, like so many Colombines before and after her, she rejects Pierrot.

masculin ou féminin dans un contexte familial et social (48).

Colombine arrives in Pouldreuzic to find Pierrot's golden oven and the intoxicating smell of bread. Exhausted by her trip, she sleeps, whereas Pierrot decides to make a bread sculpture of his beloved Colombine, who is now (in his eyes) a Colombine-Pierrette as opposed to a Colombine-Arlequine. Regarding the above motif of sexual identity, we note that specifically what is consumed of Pierrot's edible work of art are "les seins briochés de Colombine" (Tournier 1979a, n.p.). *Pierrot* can thus be seen as a story which wants to waken the child's sense of (hetero)sexuality in contrast to most children's literature which avoids this whole area. As Penrod points out, Tournier favours "une initiation littéraire qui évite certains des stéréotypes qui depuis longtemps abondent dans la littérature pour la jeunesse et en définissent souvent la critique" (45).

Aside from the above episode, there are other points in the story which similarly have to do with the issue of sexuality. My son, Alex, was particularly taken by the scene in *Pierrot* when the title character, who wanders around the village at night while his dough that has been "secrètement fécondée avec le levain" is rising, conflates the moon with his beloved Colombine: "Il imagine la jeune fille soupirant et rêvant dans la moite blancheur de son grand lit, et lorsqu'il lève sa face pâle vers la lune, il se demande si cette douce rondeur qui flotte au-dessus des arbres dans un voile de brume est celle d'une joue, d'un sein ou mieux encore

d'une fesse" (Tournier 1979a, n.p.). Alex also enjoyed answering the question found in the text: "Qu'a-t-il vu? Nous ne le saurons jamais!" which comes at the point in the story when the unfortunate Pierrot climbs up to peek into the lit window of Colombine's house the night after she has met Arlequin. For an almost six-year-old who has recently discovered the joy of kissing girls (and being kissed) on the playground, there could be no doubt but that what Pierrot sees is Arlequin and Colombine KISSING! In this case, the text of reality provides a possible answer to a puzzle which playfully makes the reader a participant in the text much like the Kharms poem that asks the audience to keep a look out for the missing man.

In addition to reading the tale in light of his or her own developing sense of sexuality, the child might also interpret the story according to other aspects of real life. For example, Tournier, who frequently makes visits to schools, explains the following regarding children's reactions to the ending of *Pierrot* which involves Arlequin being allowed to join Pierrot and Colombine inside the warm bakery:

> Je fais souvent un référendum dans la classe. Je dis: "Eh bien, voilà mes enfants. Vous connaissez la situation. Pierrot et Colombine se sont retrouvés. Ils sont heureux. On frappe à la porte. C'est Arlequin. Est-ce qu'on lui ouvre? Est-ce qu'on l'accueille ou est-ce qu'on le laisse dehors?" Eh bien, je dois vous dire que presque toujours j'ai une grande grande majorité pour qu'on laisse Arlequin dehors. On ne veut pas de trouble-famille parmi les enfants. Et un jour une petite fille m'a dit: "Monsieur, il faut laisser Arlequin dehors parce que j'ai vu ce qui est arrivé à la sœur

> de maman." Alors, il y a certainement de la part des enfants un goût de la fidélité, de la solidité, de la famille... . Et Arlequin, c'est évidemment l'élément perturbateur de la fidélité familiale (quoted in Beckett 1997, 271).[6]

My son similarly was firmly opposed to letting Arlequin in and insisted that even when the latter was allowed to enter the bakery, it was Pierrot and Colombine who were now married: Arlequin would just be their friend.

Something else that children might take from *Pierrot* is a certain initiation into philosophy and specifically an introduction to Tournier's interest in binary oppositions and their ultimate reconciliation.[7] It was, in fact, Tournier's goal at one time to become a teacher of philosophy; but after failing his *agrégation* exam, he eventually turned to being a writer for whom philosophy plays a prominent role. As Tournier himself explains about his rich little work of *littérature pierrotique*: "De grands échos retentissent dans ces puérils porte-parole. C'est Goethe et Newton séparés sur la théorie des couleurs, c'est Parménide contre Héraclite. C'est aussi mon maître Gaston Bachelard. Cela l'enfant, bien entendu, ne le sait pas. Mais il le sent, et il le comprend à sa façon" (1979b, 19).[8]

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[6]Tournier relates essentially the same story in Magnan's *Michel Tournier ou la rédemption paradoxale* (N.p.: Marval, 1996), 135-6.

[7]See Roberts 15-16 concerning Tournier's pervasive focus on contradiction, dichotomy, and the resolution of contradiction.

[8]See Vray 1997, 457-9 concerning Newton/Goethe and the discussion of their respective theories as found in Tournier's story "Lucie ou la Femme sans ombre" which was published (along with "Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit") in *Le Médianoche amoureux* (see, in particular, pp. 130-1). See also below concerning "Pierrot" as it

Tournier personally believes that the story can be read by children as young as six. And, indeed, although he could not know that Newton discovered that colours are the components of white light, etc., Alex certainly could appreciate and explain the basic juxtaposition of whiteness/dark vs. colour/light. The story begins with Colombine being dressed, like Pierrot, in white and, as I have mentioned, living in a white house across from his. Under Arlequin's influence, she begins to dye fabrics, and her house becomes multicoloured after the painter exercises his talents. Furthermore, in order to look like the image that Arlequin has created of her on her façade, Colombine trades her white dress for a harlequinesque garment. However, by the time she returns through the snow to Pierrot, her multicoloured dress is faded, making her appear to be partly connected both to Arlequin and to Pierrot. She is thus in a perfect state for uniting these contrasting figures/rivals.

But for young readers, perhaps what would be most attractive about *Pierrot* is specifically the inclusion of the song "Au Clair de la lune," which is known by children far and wide. When Arlequin arrives at the door of the bakery after Colombine has left him, he sings what the narrator describes as

> une chanson devenue célèbre depuis, mais dont les paroles ne peuvent se comprendre que si l'on connaît l'histoire que nous venons de raconter, [i.e.,] "Au clair de la lune, Mon ami Pierrot! Prête-moi ta plume, Pour écrire un mot. Ma chandelle est morte, Je n'ai plus de feu. Ouvre-moi ta porte, Pour l'amour de Dieu!" (Tournier 1979a, n.p.).

appears in the latter work.

In this way, Tournier playfully asks that his story be read as "a sort of etiological fable, relating the story of origins, as in Kipling's *Just So Stories*, which Tournier cites as one of the masterpieces of world literature, in an article which just happens to be devoted to *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit*" (Beckett 1995, 26).

As far as the real origin of the song is concerned, Jean-Louis Harter of the Institut International Charles Perrault informs me that, in fact, "Au Clair de la lune" is

> une chanson française généralement attribuée à Lully (1632-1687), Italien naturalisé Français par Louis XIV, qui le nomma surintendant de la musique de la Chambre du Roi. Cet air a connu de nombreuses variations et citations (notamment dans *Pierrot* de Debussy, et *Le Carnaval des Animaux* de Saint-Saëns)" (Fritz, Letter to the author, 25 Jan. 1999).[9]

While Tournier uses just the first stanza of the song, there are, in fact, four all together. The remaining three stanzas are as follows:

2) Au clair de la lune,
Pierrot répondit:
Je n'ai ni feu ni plume,
Je sors de mon lit;
Va chez la voisine,
Je crois qu'elle y est,
Car dans la cuisine,
On bat le briquet.

3) Au clair de la lune,
S'en fut Arlequin
Frapper chez la brune,
Ell' répond soudain:
Qui frapp' de la sorte?
Il dit tout mielleux:
Ouvrez votre porte,
J'voudrais plume et feu.

[9]See de Palacio 29-34 for an interesting account of "Décadence" rewritings of "le texte de la fameuse chanson en forme de berceuse" (29).

4) Au clair de la lune
Restez, mon gaillard,
Riposte la brune,
J'n'ouvre pas si tard;
Gagnez donc un rhume
A rôder ainsi,
Car vot' feu, vot' plume,
ça n'prend pas ici
(Fritz, Letter to the author, 8 Feb. 1999).

Child and adult readers who happen to know all four stanzas would see that aside from the final scene when Arlequin arrives and sings outside the bakery, *Pierrot* also recalls the song in another way. When Tournier's Arlequin first comes to the village, he knocks at Pierrot's door. But Pierrot, having worked all night, is in bed even though it is daytime. It is at this point that Arlequin turns to Pierrot's neighbor, Colombine, who is awake (like her counterpart in the song), and who (unlike her counterpart) most willingly lets Arlequin enter her home.

As in the case of Ionesco's *contes* and the works by my Russian authors, the illustrations for Tournier's *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit* undoubtedly play a large part in making the work appeal to children. It is interesting to note that there are two different editions of the story for juvenile readers: the first was the 1979 Enfantimages/Gallimard version, and *Pierrot* was also included (as the opening text) in the 1984 Folio Junior book of Tournier's stories entitled *Sept contes*. The former, illustrated by Danièle Bour, has very bright, childlike pictures which feature doll or marionette-like images of Colombine, Pierrot, and

Arlequin dressed in their traditional costumes (fig. 1). Pierrot, in particular, appears to be the youngest of the three: he is a boy as opposed to a man. This might serve to make the child reader identify more with the hero. At the same time, for the adult reader, Bour's image of Pierrot could suggest the fact that this boy/man has long since been characterized by an "indécision sexuelle" (de Palacio 47). This explains in part why coquettish Colombine is lost to confident Arlequin, "l'éternel séducteur" (de Palacio 78).

In contrast to Bour, Pierre Hézard, illustrator of all but the cover of *Sept contes*, has chosen to make his Colombine, Pierrot, and Arlequin resemble not dolls/puppets/children, but rather (contemporary) teenagers (fig. 2). In this way, *Sept contes* addresses itself to an older child audience than the 1979 version illustrated by Bour. Hézard, who works in black and white, but specifically a black and white that is penetrated by light, notably adds a fascinating semiotic layer to the textual focus concerning colour vs. black/white and dark vs. light. Through Hézard's contribution, the final reconciliation that will take place in the story between seeming opposites is hinted at from the outset.

4.3. "Pierrot" for Adults

There is yet another version of Tournier's *Pierrot*, this time one directed specifically at an adult audience. While in the case of Ionesco's *contes* it was the publication of the journal intended for adults which preceded the appearance of the Harlin Quist editions for children, for

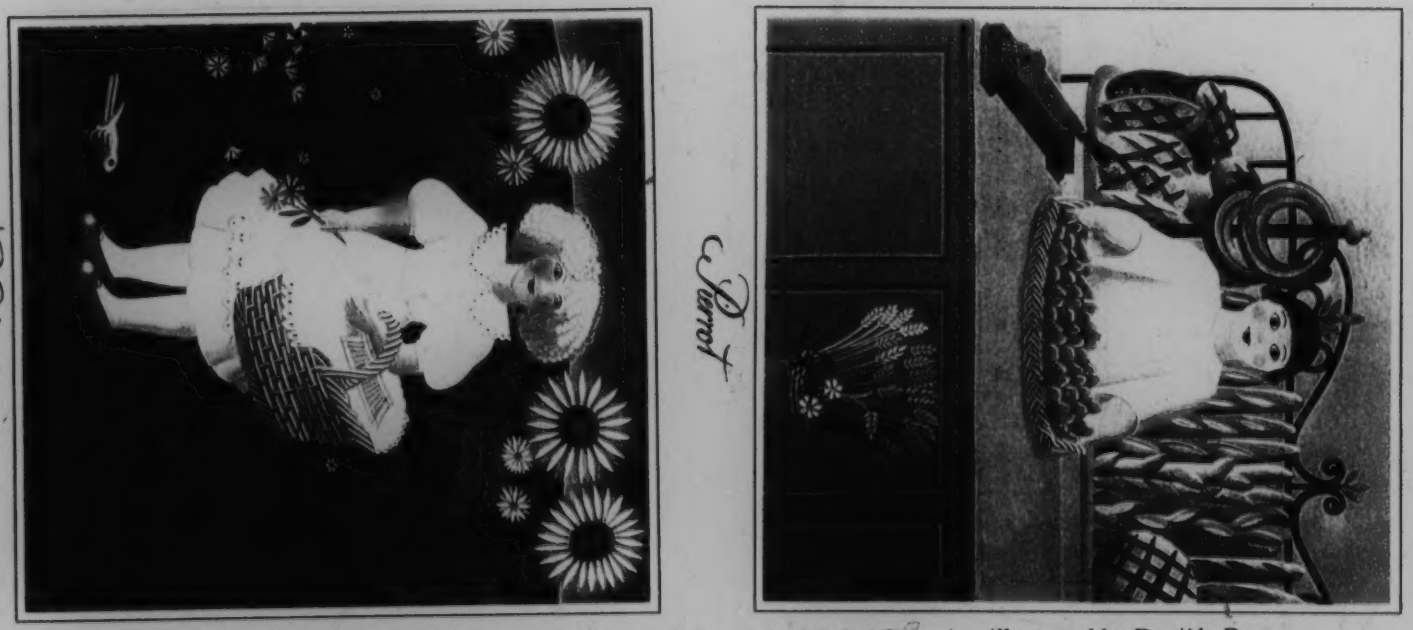

Figure 1. Illustration from *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit* by Michel Tournier, illustrated by Danièle Bour.
Copyright © 1979 by Éditions Gallimard. Reprinted by permission of Gallimard.

Figure 2. Illustration from *Sept contes* by Michel Tournier, illustrated by Pierre Hézard. Copyright © 1984 by Éditions Gallimard. Reprinted by permission of Gallimard.

Tournier the publication of the two illustrated children's versions preceded the inclusion of *Pierrot* in an unillustrated collection of stories for an adult readership: *Le Médianoche amoureux: Contes et nouvelles* (1989). As when Ionesco's *contes* are interpreted as part of *Présent passé, passé présent*, so, too, reading *Pierrot* or rather "Pierrot" in the context of *Le Médianoche amoureux* makes the adult reader see a host of additional potential meanings which would not otherwise be evoked.

Le Médianoche amoureux, which takes as its overall intertextual model other frame narratives such as Boccaccio's *Decameron*, begins with an account of a couple's loss of love. Nadège, who comes from a wealthy family of shipowners, and Yves, who began life as a lowly ship's boy, tell their own story alternately and come to the conclusion that because they no longer get along or have much to say to each other, they will separate. The announcement of their separation will be made in front of their friends at a midnight seafood feast, a *médianoche* (from the Spanish). But at this gathering, a magical thing happens: the feasting friends tell nineteen narratives—all penned by Tournier—and these tales ultimately serve to reunite Nadège and Yves such that the annoucement of their separation is never made. The marriage of fictional characters is thus saved by the power of fiction, which, it is implied, can do as much in the lives of real human beings.

The story of Pierrot and Colombine is placed specifically in the latter half of the collection alongside other tales which stress the need for reconciliation, understanding, celebration, ritual, etc. Aside from making

a connection between "l'impossible mariage des contraires inconciliables" (Roberts 160) that takes place between Pierrot/Colombine/Arlequin and the final decision of the extradiegetic Nadège and Yves not to separate, the adult reader might also perform other acts of reading that could not take place in the same way in the mind of a child reader.

For example, with its concentration on food and feasting (e.g., in "La Légende du pain" and "Les Deux banquets ou la commémoration," as well as in the *médianoche* of the frame narrative), *Le Médianoche amoureux* urges us to consider a possible allusion to the Last Supper and also the Eucharist. For Roberts, the concluding consumption of the "seins briochés" in "Pierrot" constitutes specifically an eroticized, semi-blasphemous communion and is "one of the densest [episodes] in all of Tournier's fiction, both in terms of its reference to themes from that fiction and of the richness of its symbolic connotations" (156). One of numerous possible intertextual connections that would be perceived by a reader familiar with Tournier's other literature would be the late arrival at the Last Supper of Taor, the fourth Magus, who becomes the first to receive the Eucharist (*Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* and *Les Rois mages*).

While an occasional child reader might arrive independently at the connection between Pierrot's brioche and the Eucharist, as well as with Taor, only an adult reader could likely understand that the Taor/Pierrot communions are similar in the following way: in both cases Tournier presents his own heterodox version of Christianity which features

communion with (and salvation by) the Holy Spirit as part of the replacement of a Christ-centered religion that is, in the words of one of Tournier's characters, "une religion de la souffrance, de l'agonie et de la mort" (Tournier 1975, 133). As Susan Petit explains, the reconciliation and mutual forgiveness symbolized by the three characters who share the Colombine-brioche is initiated specifically by Colombine whose name comes from "*colombe* meaning 'dove', the usual symbol for the Holy Spirit" (1990, 95). Similarly, the ending of *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* (and *Les Rois mages*) presents Taor as being

> saved before (and therefore not by) Christ's death on the cross; it must be the Holy Spirit that has saved him. Tournier's association of communion with the Holy Spirit underscores the centrality of the Holy Spirit in his theology; just as Colombine's role as savior explains why she is a laundress: to Tournier, it is the Holy Spirit that washes away sins (Petit 1990, 97).

Aside from the above symbolic reading, another possible symbolic (adult) interpretation of the final reconciliation between Pierrot, Arlequin, and Colombine is as follows. Particularly when read as part of *Le Médianoche amoureux*, a volume which has much to do with the value and function of art/literature, "Pierrot" can notably be seen as a self-referential treatise on Tournier's own poetics that itself succeeds in a sort of reconciliation. Jean-Bernard Vray (1980 and 1997) and Roberts (1994) both argue for the centrality of *Pierrot*/"Pierrot" to Tournier's whole œuvre and explore specifically the fact that Arlequin and Pierrot

can be seen to represent opposing artistic tendencies/aesthetics which Tournier manages to pull together in his literature. The traditionalist (bread) sculptor Pierrot, who is "associated with depth, with the reality or true nature of things..., with their actual substance" is the rival of Arlequin, a painter whose art is new, superficial, ephemeral, modern, or even post-modern (Roberts 157-8; cf. Vray 1980, 161-2 and Vray 1997, 454-5). Roberts explains the plot of the story in these terms:

> Arlequin embodies the postmodernist aesthetic to which Tournier is continually drawn, and intermittently espouses—through Alexandre, Balthazar in *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar*, Etienne Milan in *La Goutte d'or*, and Arlequin—while hesitating to commit himself to it outright. Pierrot, on the other hand, embodies the security of the more traditional aesthetic with which Tournier seems dissatisfied, yet remains reluctant to relinquish, and to which he returns after his flirtations with Arlequin....
>
> Through the reconciliation of Pierrot and Arlequin, then, *Pierrot* enacts an imaginary solution to an aesthetic conflict which underpins Tournier's fiction (160).

Vray, whose 1980 article, "L'habit d'Arlequin," apparently helped Roberts develop his own interpretation of this story, suggests another, related way of looking at the final reconciliation of these *commedia* characters. Namely, they symbolize the uniting of myth and the novel which is what Tournier is forever attempting to do:

> De cette tentative passionnante: réconcilier mythe et roman, est-il impossible que soient nées les deux figures duelles, les

> deux avatars du créateur: Pierrot et Arlequin, l'un représentant l'idéal à jamais révolu d'une parole mythique heureuse, l'autre incarnant peut-être la modernité problématique de la parole romanesque (1980, 164; cf. Vray 1997, 459).

It becomes obvious that this is a story which can mean any number of things depending on the reader's particular literary competence and concerns. There is another adult reading of Tournier's tale that I would like to consider, one which I myself engaged in and which, although mentioned by Tournier, has apparently not been explored by others: the intertextual connection with Marcel Carné's film *Les Enfants du paradis*.[10] While Petit maintains that Tournier's tale was inspired by "Au Clair de la lune" (1991, 109), Carné's masterpiece, for which Jacques Prévert wrote the screenplay, also might have served as one of many other possible inspirations.

Pierrot, a naïve buffoon character, first appeared under his own name and in his familiar baggy, white costume at the end of the seventeenth century (Storey 14). But it was largely through the work of the great Romantic Pierrot, Jean-Gaspard Deburau, who debuted in 1825 at the little Théâtre des Funambules, that Pierrot became the central figure in pantomime instead of Arlequin (Jones 1984a, 20; cf. 1984b, 43). *Les Enfants du paradis* focuses on Deburau, who is called Baptiste in the

[10] *Les Enfants du paradis*, dir. Marcel Carné, scénario de Jacques Prévert, Pathé, 1943-45. Incidentally, Prévert is an adult/children's system author, too. His first collection of poetry, *Paroles*, was published in 1946, a year before his well-known *Contes pour enfants pas sages*.

film[11] and whose theatrical life of playing the rejected lover, vanquished by Arlequin, is paralleled by his real-life failure to woo his "Colombine."

Discussing briefly the connection between his Pierrot-Arlequin-Colombine trio and what is found in other works, Tournier himself explains that in the film,

> vous avez Pierrot, qui est Jean-Louis Barrault en Baptiste, qui ne dit rien. C'est un silencieux parce que c'est un mime, il ne sait pas parler. Et puis Arlequin, qui est Pierre Brasseur, le beau parleur, le séducteur, et Arletty [Garance] qui hésite entre les deux et elle se trompe. Elle va retrouver Brasseur, Arlequin-Brasseur et elle désespère Jean-Louis Barrault-Baptiste, et finalement elle s'aperçoit qu'elle s'est lourdement trompée (quoted in Beckett 1997, 270).[12]

It is interesting to note that in *Les Enfants du paradis* Garance, who explains that her original name was the very symbolic Claire, says that she was once a "blanchisseuse," a job, she jokes, that would have been pleasant if only people were cleaner.[13] One wonders if this somehow influenced

[11]Louise Jones provides an explanation for why Jean-Gaspard is named "Baptiste" in *Les Enfants du paradis*: "His first name is often cited as Jean-Baptiste; Tristan Rémy, his biographer, says Baptiste was simply a name commonly used for performers in the profession" (1984b, 41).

[12]Cf. Tournier's comments that appear in Jean-Pierre Zarader's *Vendredi ou la Vie sauvage de Michel Tournier: un parcours philosophique* (208) and Jean-Marie Magnan's *Michel Tournier ou la rédemption paradoxale* (136). In fact, the love triangles in the film are more complicated than what Tournier describes: Garance is loved by four men. At the same time, Baptiste is loved by Nathalie, whom he endlessly rejects, as well as (at least in the end) by Garance.

[13]In the first pantomime featured in *Les Enfants du paradis*, Nathalie plays a laundress, recalling Garance's profession and implying that Nathalie is Garance's

Tournier to make his Colombine a laundress, too. As far as Pierrot being portrayed as a baker is concerned, Vray notes that Deburau, "au siècle dernier, avait déjà composé et interprété un Pierrot mitron" (1980, 149). In fact, this "personnage éminemment instable" has also been, among other things, "Pierrot apprenti sorcier, Pierrot malade, Pierrot fleuriste, Pierrot joueur, Pierrot voleur..., Pierrot peintre" (de Palacio 13). But aside from Deburau, others have also occasionally taken the white face—white as if covered by flour—to be a clue to his profession or to his origins. For example, Alfred Assollant's children's work *L'Histoire fantastique du célèbre Pierrot* (1865) explains that Pierrot was born "enfariné" because his father was a *meunier* and his mother a *meunière* (de Palacio 158).[14] And, related to, yet at the same time in striking contrast to Tournier's Pierrot, the Pierrot character in J.-K. Huysmans's *Croquis Parisiens* is a violent baker's apprentice (Jones 1984a, 71).

What is most significant about the intertextual play between "Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit" and *Les Enfants du paradis*, as well as between the former and innumberable other Pierrot images and narratives, is that Tournier playfully inverts our expectations at least twice. Not only does Tournier's Pierrot win Colombine, but his rival, Arlequin, is not left out in the cold (as in the final stanza of the song "Au Clair de la lune"). And neither is Arlequin or anyone else punished in worse ways.

As Tournier's adult reader might know, particularly in the hands of

(virtuous) double.

[14]See de Palacio 157-88 for a fascinating exploration of specifically "le blanc et le noir" in the characterization of Pierrot.

the Decadents, Pierrot became vengeful and frightful: the comic buffoon of the old *commedia dell'arte* turned into a tragedian. Coming to represent such things as the superfluous man and the failure of marriage (Colombine was often cast as Pierrot's wife and Arlequin her lover), Pierrot frequently was moved to kill either himself and/or others, or at least to contemplate such acts. Thus, in Henri Rivière's *Pierrot*, the title character slits Arlequin's throat. Paul Margueritte's title speaks for itself: *Pierrot assassin de sa femme*. In *Colombine pardonnée*, also by Margueritte, Colombine does return to her husband for a reconciliation, and he grants his forgiveness... but then he kills her anyway.

Continuing in the same vein, in one of Deburau's pantomines, *Pierrot coiffeur*, Pierrot kills Arlequin. The corpse comes to life again, but later Pierrot cuts off Arlequin's head and puts it on a platter. Although subsequently the head sticks out its tongue, apparently this time Arlequin is truly dead. In another of Deburau's pantomimes, after Arlequin rescues Colombine, whom Pierrot had tied to a tree, Pierrot and his monkey friend start to hang themselves (but they are stopped by a Good Fairy).

In the first pantomime in *Les Enfants du paradis*, Pierrot similarly tries to hang himself: other characters, including Nathalie as the laundress (see note 13), end up stopping him. Off-stage, Nathalie explains that it was Baptiste's own idea to have his character attempt suicide over the loss of his Colombine. Nathalie, like the movie audience, connects this morbid dramatic plan to Baptiste's real-life sorrow at losing Garance, who plays

Colombine in the pantomime, to Frédéric—who has been cast as Arlequin. Furthermore, in *Marrrchand d'habits*, which is the final pantomime featured in *Les Enfants du paradis*, Pierrot engages in the ghastly act of stabbing a passing clothes merchant in order to steal some of his wares.

Curiously enough, Pierrot-the-character's turn toward blackness became confused with life when in 1836 Deburau killed a man by hitting him over the head with his cane.[15] Although Deburau was acquitted, the murder gave a new and eerie significance to the sorts of things Pierrot was doing on stage. Ironically, "the pantomime being prepared before [the murder] had to be scrapped: it was entitled *Pierrot assassin*" (Jones 1984b, 46).

Thus, rather than hold a dagger in his blood-stained hand like Pierrot in Gustav Adolf Mossa's terrifying painting *Pierrot s'en va* (1906)[16] or engage in other dark acts as in the above examples, Tournier's protagonist comes into sharp contrast with the frightful image of these "Pierrot-Lunaire" figures (Jones 1984a, 10). At the same time, Tournier's Pierrot makes us recall all the merely melancholic faces of Pierrot, including Watteau's *Pierrot* (1717),[17] Picasso's *Pierrot* (1918), and George Rouault's *Pierrot* (1926), all of whose sorrows are as if cancelled when

[15]An interesting connection exists in that this act by a real-life Pierrot recalls similar murders by the canes of Moses and Éléazar, the parallel fates of whom are the focus of Tournier's most recent book, *Éléazar ou la Source et le buisson*.

[16]See the cover illustration of de Palacio's book.

[17]Martin Green notes that Watteau's *Gilles* was recently renamed *Pierrot* (6), and so it is the latter title that I use.

we read of Pierrot's happy triumph in Tournier's late twentieth-century tale. No longer "a poet in love with dreams" (Catulle Mendès, quoted in Storey, 122), finally, Pierrot is allowed to receive the prizes of real love and friendship that were not granted to him before.

While the child reader might not know Watteau or Decadent literature, he or she will similarly understand that Tournier's Pierrot will not have to shed the eternal tear that marks his doll and puppet namesakes. And child and adult readers alike will see that Tournier turns around Pierrot's fate much as the author does, for example, with that of Vendredi (and Robinson, too) in *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* and *Vendredi ou la Vie sauvage*.

As I said above, in 1986 Tournier described his Pierrot story as the best thing he had ever written. Earlier, in 1982, Tournier had referred to the same work as "ces trente pages—pour lesquelles je donnerais tout le reste de mon œuvre" (Tournier 1982, 33). In her 1994 interview with Tournier, Sandra Beckett had the chance to ask if Tournier still felt the same way about this work. His reply: "Absolument. Absolument, parce qu'entre temps on en a tiré trois opéras, une douzaine d'adaptations théâtrales. Eh oui, franchement, je crois que s'il y a quelque chose dans ce que j'ai écrit qui doit rester, ça doit être ces quelque cinq ou six feuillets" (quoted in Beckett 1997, 284).[18] No doubt, Tournier's ongoing satisfaction regarding *Pierrot*/"Pierrot" also stems from the fact

[18]The text of the story, in fact, occupies around eighteen pages in the 1979 edition; just over twenty in *Sept contes* and sixteen in *Le Médianoche amoureux*. Thus, "cinq ou six feuillets" is a bit low. And "trente" from the 1982 quotation is high. But Tournier's point is clear.

that, as I have shown, it truly does contain much to interest and entertain both child and adult readers. And those who have encountered the work as children can return to it later in life to see how a more mature mind, increased life experience, and greater literary competence can yield new readings.

Conclusion
Intersections and Future Paths

I have considered in detail how "children's" works by a number of adult/children's system authors could be naturalized by both child and adult readers, including how the texts could be related to genres with which the reader would be familiar, other specific texts either by the given author or by others, the real world, socio-cultural factors, etc. In addition, where applicable, I have discussed the possible "reading" of the illustrations which may either 1) extend and develop the ambivalence of a given text as in the work of Delessert and also, to some extent, in Pierre Hézard's black and white images from Tournier's *Sept contes,* or 2) not participate in the play of ambivalence as in the illustrations by the Russian artists, as well as in Danièle Bour's pictures for *Pierrot ou les Secrets de la nuit.*

It is a principal goal of polysystem studies to unveil patterns of "interference" which Even-Zohar defines as "a relation(ship) between literatures whereby a certain literature A (a source literature) may become a source of direct or indirect loans for another literature B (a target literature)" (1990, 54) and which "cannot take place without some kind of *contact(s)* between the respective literatures" (1990, 55). Even-Zohar himself, for example, has done work on the question of interference in Israeli Hebrew literature. He shows that the latter, which

constitutes a young polysystem, has been greatly influenced by Russian literature owing largely to the fact that so many Jews themselves emigrated from Russia. Original Russsian works have been widely translated into Hebrew, but, in addition, Hebrew translations have been done of Russian translations from Scandinavian, Italian, English, and other literatures. It goes without saying that in the mind of an individual plural system author there is a possibility of 'contact' concerning literatures or literary projects and that some sort of interference might take place. This is exactly what Jane Grayson finds in the case of Nabokov. For example, she looks at the apparent interference between *Lolita* and Nabokov's later work. In order to capitalize upon his success with his story about a nymphette, the author tried to make his subsequent auto-translations of various works resemble *Lolita*: Nabokov began to strive for greater artfulness, more depth of characterization, more imagery, as well as notably more pornographic material (see, for example, Grayson 115).

The fact that my five adult/children's system authors have created ambivalent works thus suggests that there may be some form of interference between these authors' children's literature and literature for adults. Returning to Even-Zohar's concept of the polysystem, we read that the polysystem is defined as "a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap" (Even-Zohar 1979, 290). It is thus precisely this intersecting and overlapping territory that is represented by such ambivalent works. These works can furthermore be

seen to straddle the line between the children's and the adult systems not only within what I have referred to as an individual adult/children's system author's "microsystem," but also within the literary polysystem as a whole.

Many other nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers of literature for adults who have turned to writing for a junior readership—including George MacDonald, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, A.A. Milne—have likewise created ambivalent works which can be seen to interfere with their literature for adults as in the cases I have examined. However, as I pointed out in my introduction, further research would need to be done in order to establish a causal link between the fact of being a member of the adult system and the tendency to write specifically ambivalent children's literature. Additionally, a hypothesis would have to be formulated concerning why single system children's authors sometimes write ambivalent texts. Are they perhaps imitating models created by adult/children's system authors? In order to answer this question, further research analyzing the specific points of intersection will be required. Another important issue would be the varying degrees of ambivalence in texts. Perhaps it is the case that single system authors tend to limit their use of ambivalent codes as compared to adult/children's system authors. But this again is an empirical question that needs to be tested by means of appropriate methodologies. A related question that could be explored concerns the presence of ambivalence in the illustrations for completely nonambivalent texts.[1]

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[1]This has already been looked at to some degree. See, for example, Celia Catlett

As I have shown, for my adult/children's system authors—as for anyone—working in the realm of the ambivalent text can pose certain problems. First, I described the cessation of Kharms's and Zoshchenko's literary careers in which the act of writing "children's literature for adults, too" played a significant role. Second, I considered the fate of Ionesco's *contes*: the 'hate mail', for example, that Harlin Quist received regarding *Story Number 1*. Tournier also has had much trouble, particularly with regards to his desire to bring questions of sexuality into works that are intended to include young readers in the audience. He explains, for example:

> Malheureusement, je me heurte a la censure, car je parle du corps, de la sexualité, etc. et les libraires, les associations de parents n'aiment pas ça. Un jour, quelqu'un m'a dit: "Vous écrivez des livres d'enfants à ne pas mettre entre toutes les mains" —ce qui est vrai, mais je précise: "A ne pas mettre entre les mains de tous les adultes" (1980, 45).

I would certainly argue that adult/children's system authors have much to offer both adult and child readers, depending on such factors as: the individual development of the child and his or her willingness to contend with *not* understanding certain things; the adult's desire to allow a child to be exposed to something like Tournier's presentation of sexuality; the adult's own unreluctance to read what may at first glance

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Anderson's "Images et références: apprendre aux enfants à relever les allusions" in *Jeux graphiques dans l'album pour la jeunesse*, ed. Jean Perrot (Paris: CRDP de l'Académie de Créteil, 1991): 63-71.

appear to be childlike works and, furthermore, his or her willingness to explain possible readings to a child, etc.

In order that more people would read and thereby become more accustomed to reading ambivalent texts, it would be wise to divide libraries not only into "children's departments" and "adults' floors," but also to have a space somewhere in the middle where Quist publications, Tournier's stories, and their ilk might have a chance to flourish. This special type of literature for which "l'enfant a besoin d'être sur les genoux de l'adulte avec une certaine participation, une certaine complicité de ce dernier" (Ruy-Vidal, quoted in Soriano, 463)—or at times an adult 'participation et complicité' that are truly quite great—represents a remarkable way to bridge intergenerational gaps and to encourage the development of child readers toward the mature readers whom hopefully they will become. At the same time, children (and adults, too) have the option of concentrating on the childlike aspects in adult/children's system authors' works which are often characterized by much delightful innovation vis-à-vis mainstream or preexisting children's literature: recall, for example, Chukovskii's novel parade of exotic animals, insects, and inanimate objects.

In the future, I hope to continue my research on adult/children's system authors. While my present work has focused on adult/children's system authors whose literatures and audiences appear to suggest the presence of "interference" (Even-Zohar 1990, 54), the absence of apparent interference and very divergent strategies in an adult/children's

system author's literatures could be a very interesting focus, too. At the same time, there are other areas that I would like to explore concerning adult/children's system authors who cause their literatures to merge in some fashion. For example, Elena Sokol mentions an intriguing case of transferring elements from one's own children's literature to one's works for adults. Nikolai Zabolotskii began to write for children at a time when his career as a poet for adults was in its infancy, joining Marshak's staff in 1927. Sokol notes that "in his subsequent adult poetry of the late 1920s and early 1930s, one finds both thematic and structural elements that could be attributed to his new experience in children's literature" (147). I am particularly interested in looking for other manifestations of such transfers from the children's to the adult system, transfers which go in the opposite direction to what is the norm for the polysystem as a whole.

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